

TOWARD A BIBLICAL “STRATEGY” OF MISSION:
THE EFFECTS OF THE FIVE CHRISTIAN
“CORE VALUES” OF IRIS GLOBAL

Rolland Baker

B.A., Vanguard University, 1985
M.A., Vanguard University, 1986

Faculty Mentors
Gary Greig, Ph.D.
Andrew Park, Ph.D.
Jon Mark Ruthven, Ph.D.

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by

**Rolland Baker
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**Gary Greig, Ph.D.
Andrew Park, Ph.D.
Jon Mark Ruthven, Ph.D.**

Date: _____

Approved:

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

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ABSTRACT

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Traditional missions research focuses on developing “scientific” strategies. By contrast, this thesis, based on the experience of “real world” evangelization and on the premise that true Christian mission methods and outcomes are ultimately “spiritually discerned,” examines the influence of a missions strategy consisting not of “scientifically” determined mission “methods,” but the integration of five simple, New Testament-based “core values” which manifest in the attitudes, experiences and tangible results of Iris Global’s ministry, primarily in Mozambique, Africa. This thesis, accordingly, employs a post-modern, intuitive, pro-active, qualitative research model, articulated in narrative form, in order to assess the validity and fruit of these values.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I must acknowledge my wife Heidi for her unswerving confidence that Jesus wanted me to finish this degree program, and her never-ending faith that it would happen in spite of the intensity, pressures and challenges of our nonstop ministry in Africa and around the world. Her affectionate love and support, and even stubborn insistence, was crucial to me. The core values of Iris have originated as much through her as through me, and in many ways this is “our” project. For many years her giftings and encounters with God have given her the faith, love, initiative, courage and endurance to model our core values daily for the world to see. Iris Global would not exist without her, and I would not be writing this document without my history with her.

My first exposure to this program and my possible participation in it came through Randy Clark and Tom Jones during one of their visits to Pemba, Mozambique. Their faith, example and testimonies, added to their child-like enthusiasm in the Lord and their good-natured, fun friendship over many years, made the decision to participate easy. Throughout the program their encouragement has been a gift from Jesus.

Surprise Sithole, for many years our national director of Iris Global in Mozambique, and one of our international directors, together with Heidi and me, has been a pillar of revelation, strength, purity and integrity in the power of God, and his life, love and encouragement has been used by the Lord to keep the ministry of Iris Global centered and on track. He is a priceless friend with whom I confer regarding all aspects of our core values.

Our entire family of Iris Global, including our friends, directors, pastors, leaders and pioneers all over the world have been consistently supportive of my work and

writing, and all have played a part on solidifying our core values and putting them into practice in obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Finally, my mentors, Jon Ruthven, Andrew Park and Gary Greig, have been amazing with their constantly supportive, always edifying, and even bold, encouragement for me to write as the Spirit leads me into ever newer ground. They are agreed that scholarly care, integrity and precision can mix with unlimited devotion and experience with our Perfect Savior for the purpose of building up the body of Christ.

DEDICATIONS

This project is dedicated to my wife Heidi, and our children Elisha and Crystalyn.

INTRODUCTION

A large-scale supernatural phenomenon has occurred in southeast Africa. A Christian people movement encompassing thousands of mostly small, remote bush churches has sprung up and flourished across the ten provinces of the huge but extremely poor nation of Mozambique.¹ Beginning in 1995 with a small band of delinquent, abandoned street children at a neglected government center, the movement has become a holistic ministry not limited to particular specialties, but which includes evangelism, village outreaches, Bible schools, missions schools, medical clinics, primary and secondary schools, farming, vocational training, church planting, bush conferences, counseling, child sponsorship and in the near future, a university for the poor—and more.²

The movement has grown organically, taking on the flavor and direction of the giftings brought its way in the lives of hundreds of missionaries and thousands of national believers. It is more a family than a ministry organization, and hunger for its atmosphere,

1. A summary of Mozambique's economic history can be found at: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "Mozambique," *The World Factbook*, last modified November 5, 2013, accessed November 14, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mz.html>. The 2012 rankings in the Human Development Index, calculated by the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations, still list Mozambique at position 185 out of 187 nations. This information and other "International Human Development Indicators" are provided at: United Nations Human Development Report Office, "Human Development Index (HDI) - 2012 Rankings," *Human Development Reports*, March 14, 2013, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.

2. This trajectory is partially chronicled in three of our books: Rolland and Heidi Baker, *There Is Always Enough* (Tonbridge, Kent, UK: Sovereign World, 2003); Rolland and Heidi Baker, *The Hungry Always Get Fed* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: New Wine Press, 2007); Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Learning to Love* (Barham Court, Teston, Maidstone, Kent, UK: River Publishing, 2012). Much more information concerning our history, activities and plans are available in written, photographic and video form at our website, <http://www.irisglobal.org>.

“feel” and spiritual “DNA”³ has spread to the extent that it now touches more than thirty nations.⁴ Now called “Iris Global,” it is primarily a practical, down-to-earth demonstration of the truth of the gospel and the power of God in one of the most challenging environments on earth. It is a testament to God’s agency, for all that has happened in these eighteen years since 1995 could not possibly have been foreseen and engineered by human strategic methodology.

This project has resulted in a compendium of spiritual understandings gained through more than thirty years of practical ministry on foreign mission fields, a record of activity that could be described as continuous, long-term action research.⁵ We are convinced that the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ lies in its simplicity: utter and complete dependence on His grace, never allowing anything to empty the cross of its power. We are to humble ourselves as little children, lowly and contrite, and thereby enter into a fruitful Kingdom of love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, fully adopted by the King. While sharing the broad convictions of conservative, historical Christian orthodoxy, the extreme pressures and challenges of our ministry have refined our outlook in ways that emphasize five particular core values that have enabled us to survive and witness against all odds a wind of revival that has far exceeded our expectations. We take no credit for this, nor do we offer any sure, replicable method to achieve the same results elsewhere, but we point solely to Jesus as our source of hope and life. To us our non-optional and non-negotiable core values have been imparted to us by the Holy Spirit

3. Our hearts are characterized by a continuous hunger to experience more of God and His spreading, overcoming Kingdom, a hunger that motivates us daily and continuously to explore and try everything we can toward that end. We are never satisfied by lesser end goals, and are never “passive” about pushing boundaries and seeking Him with all our hearts.

4. As of this writing, the list includes Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, China, Congo, Costa Rica, France, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Malawi, Micronesia, Mozambique, Nepal, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tibet, Uganda, UK, USA, Zimbabwe.

5. Throughout our years of ministry we have searched for “what works,” always exploring and experimenting, modifying and changing course in order to know Jesus better, learn His ways and be as fruitful as possible. To us this is ultimate action research.

through scripture, testimony and experience. We cannot function without confidence in finding and experiencing God, depending on His miraculous power in all things, concentrating first on the poorest and neediest, willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel, and being energized by the joy of the Lord.

This study culminates especially in an examination of the recent exponential growth of Iris churches among the Makua and Makonde tribes in the province of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique, people groups totaling more than six million people that have for years been characterized by missiologists as “unreached.”⁶ We see this growth as the result of “faith working through love,” the only thing that counts, according to Paul (Gal. 5:6 NIV11). The Word is preached, signs and wonders follow, and the people run to Jesus as they experience His infinite love. It is our job in Iris Global to stay as low as possible and depend on the Holy Spirit to change hearts and accomplish what only He can do.

This document is an attempt to describe what God has done, and to attribute to Him alone the ministry success that we have witnessed. Life has sprung up. Fruit has been produced. Change has happened. The church has become a river flowing from the throne. Living water is flowing from hearts. What we have dreamed of as ministers of the gospel has materialized and manifested beyond what we could have asked or imagined. Our appetite for Jesus is whetted indescribably. We have a perfect Savior, able to address the most severe human need. He is our ultimate destination. We are on course. In Him we have found our home, and He is the deepest desire of our hearts. An entire people

6. That is, without enough Christians to evangelize the rest of the groups. For example, the research data supplied in the “Monthly updates of the Global Status of Evangelical Christianity (GSEC),” posted at <http://www.peoplegroups.org>, have long listed these tribes as part of a subset of “Unreached People Groups” labeled “Last Frontier People Groups,” with populations that are less than 2% evangelical Christian and highly resistant to the gospel. Detailed statistical information on unreached people groups of the world is provided by Global Research in spreadsheet form at the above website. Because of so many years of warfare, missionary presence in Mozambique has been sparse. Early in our time in Mozambique we were regularly advised by the small missionary community there that these northern tribes were “unreachable,” hardened by witchcraft, prevalent demon possession and even cannibalism.

movement is hidden in the recesses of His limitless heart, as are all things good and perfect.

This ministry is messy, abounding in human weaknesses. Revival among us occurs in spite of us, to the glory of God. This writing project is not an effort to explain how human beings may achieve ministry goals. It is a depiction of the overpowering cutting edge of the Holy Spirit, a Niagara Falls of grace, a cascading, thundering, refreshing, white purity capable of carving through the hardest rock of human hearts, leaving eternal monuments to the glory of God.

We in Iris Global have been led by the Spirit, even as our weaknesses have continuously been revealed. We are given divine strategies, and we have labored hard according to His directives as we have understood them. We do dream, imagine, pray, teach, plan, prepare and disciple our people. But the decisive conclusion of this doctoral presentation is that Jesus is Himself the point of our lives, and of everything. He is not only the architect and engineer of revival, and all true ministry, but He is our life. He is not a means to an end; He is our end. Our hearts are not set on our ministry, but on Him. We do not use Him to achieve ministry success; we seek Him. He is our success, our motivation, our purpose. We have a higher goal than proving our competence as ministers. Without Him we can do nothing. And so we cannot overemphasize our nothingness in the ministry of Iris Global, just as we cannot overemphasize His transcendent role among us.

To convey, develop and underscore these conclusions, we will proceed through a logical sequence of chapters. There could be no more detailed, thorough and vivid way to describe what has happened in Iris Global than to quote from present-tense accounts that were written over these past years, mostly unpublished. From a huge amount of material we will extract excerpts to explain what we have done and what God has done. Most pertinently we will attempt to express from testimonies the nature of what is possible in relationships between God and His people. We conclude in general that the church greatly

underestimates how much God loves us, what He can and will do for us, and how much it is possible for us to love God by the power of the Spirit.

It would be impossible to establish any kind of adequate understanding of how and why our ministry has proceeded in Mozambique the way it has without providing details of our spiritual background and previous experience. In chapter one we do so, and consider in some detail the situation we encountered in Mozambique at our arrival, truly the most challenging we could find. In chapter two we present our approach and attitude toward ministry and the controversial subject of revival. We have had long experience with various denominational approaches to missions, and much academic exposure to the multiplicity of missions models in practice today, which we summarize here. Our direction is a response to this rich background, and is both indebted to it and a reaction to it. In chapter three we present in more detail and specificity those theoretical foundations that have most shaped and influenced us, resulting in core values that have steered our course from our earliest days in Mozambique. In chapter four we introduce and develop our five core values, and provide an introduction to how we have implemented those values in our overall ministry. In chapter five we present detailed, descriptive news excerpts from previous writings that describe what actually has happened as these core values have been consistently held since our arrival in Mozambique in 1995. Current commentary will be provided. Chapter six concludes with current reflections and a summary of our ministry understanding to this point. Again we are looking for the fruit of our focus on Jesus and the core values He has impressed on us.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The context of this writing project is set in the past, present and future, all three. Specifically and literally my wife's and my life ministry has been focused on proving the gospel in the poorest and most challenging circumstances we could find in the world. We wanted to preach a Jesus who was enough for "the least of these," and therefore was enough for anyone anywhere.

The Past

Our hearts came to be focused on the poor in our early years in Asia, but while working with drug addicts, street sleepers and the elderly poor in Hong Kong, we were acutely aware that we were not in the poorest of environments. Hong Kong is one of the richest cities in the world per capita, with glittering hotels, shopping centers and fine cars everywhere.¹ Of course we could have spent our whole lives ministering in just one dark, back alley behind those bright lights, such was the extreme population density of the city. Our apartment complex alone housed sixty thousand people, and our church was located in central Kowloon, Hong Kong, one of the most crowded urban areas in the world. Poverty and misery were always right around the corner.

But overall we realized this was not the greatest test of the gospel we could find. Hong Kong had money. Countless churches, organizations, businessmen and people of all kinds were around who could help. The city had no excuse. Also, its spiritual atmosphere

1. Hong Kong is ranked number thirteen by per capita income in the CIA World Factbook's rankings, one position above the United States, with an estimated annual per capita income of \$52,300. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "GDP - PER CAPITA (PPP)," *The World Factbook*, July 1, 2013, accessed November 14, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html?countryName=Kosovo&countryCode=kv®ionCode=eur&rank=139>.

was relatively cold. The pursuit of money was its religion, and its chief temples were banks. Few were interested in the gospel, and we doubted that we would see great revival there.

But I wanted not only to preach the basic evangelistic message, but also its implications for daily life under stress and persecution. As I wrote in our first book,

I always wanted to believe and live the Sermon on the Mount, but usually got told that it did not mean all that I thought it meant, and that I needed to be practical. I would read the scriptures longingly, trying to imagine how wonderful it would be not to worry about anything, safe and secure in the presence of Jesus all the time. Miracles would be normal. Love would be natural. We could always give and never lose. We could be lied to, cheated and stolen from, and yet always come out ahead. We would never have to take advantage of anyone, or have any motive but to bless other people. Rather than always making contingency plans in case Jesus did not do anything, we could count on Him continually. We, our lives, and all that we preach and provide would not be for sale, but would be given freely, just as we have received freely. Our hearts would be carefree in the love of our Father in heaven, who always knows what we need, and we could get on with the glorious business of seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness. There would always be enough!²

And so, after twelve years of ministry in Asia, I began seriously looking at the world for the ultimate proving ground where we could live out the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus had already spoken audibly to Heidi about being a missionary to Asia, England and Africa.³ We knew England would be an intermediate step, and I began to study Africa, a place utterly foreign and unfamiliar to me.

One day in Hong Kong I began reading *Time Magazine*'s coverage of the civil war in Mozambique. "Heidi!" I called. "You want a mission field? Listen to this! They're blowing up Red Cross trucks in Mozambique!"

"Oh!" she called back. "Let's go there! They need help!" That began our story in the world's poorest country, one that lost everything by trying to take what it wanted by force. And then for a few years no matter what else we did, we kept our eye on

2. Baker, *Always Enough*, Introduction, 9.

3. Ibid., 26.

Mozambique. We researched it, and all of Africa. We studied statistics. We read history.⁴ Mozambique was in war, and we couldn't get into it, but we got as close as we could. While studying in England we flew to Tanzania for our first taste of Africa. But to us Mozambique was the ultimate barrier—and the mission field of our dreams. Would we ever get there? What could we do there? Would there be enough of all that it took to be God's hands and feet extended to that country? Was Jesus enough?

Mozambique got its independence from Portugal in 1975 after wearing down the colonialists with guerrilla warfare. A severe Marxist regime was set up, patterned after and supported by Russia and China. But a resistance movement, the Renamo, developed and for almost two decades struggled for democracy against the communist government, the Frelimo. Mozambique's Portuguese-built infrastructure, unusually good for Africa, was nearly wiped out. Roads, bridges, villages, schools and hospitals were blown up. Savage torture and killing took place. Millions fled the country as refugees. Over a million land mines were planted, resulting in the world's highest percentage of maimed and disabled people. In some areas half the population died from untreated infections after being blown apart by explosions.

Two-thirds of Mozambicans were illiterate. Many teenagers never learned to do anything but shoot an AK-47. Eighty-five percent of the people lived in huts, and only five percent had electricity. Less than ten percent had piped water; the rest used wells, rivers and lakes. Two-thirds of Mozambican houses do not even have pit latrines. There was only one doctor for every 40,000 people. Most did not even have access to aspirin. Half the children were dead by age five. Thousands died of malaria every year. And without the protection of immunizations taken for granted in most of the world, they were ravaged by common childhood diseases as well.

4. Two rare, expensive and extremely thorough coverages of Mozambique's wars are: João M. Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (Hounds Mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2000); and William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

The war shredded Mozambique's already unviable socialist economy, which after the Cold War was no longer propped up by Russian and Chinese aid. Years of drought added famine to war. In province after province across the large country, twice the size of California, children and adults wandered in blackened, burned-out villages, without clothes and food. Without international aid, half the country would have died.

By the early 1990s the people were exhausted. The warring parties were out of money. In 1992 a peace accord was signed, and in 1994 under UN supervision a new, democratic government was sworn in. One-third of the almost two million Mozambicans who fled the country because of war, banditry and drought returned.

Suddenly, in January of 1995, we had our chance. On short notice I was invited by a South African evangelist through a mutual friend to speak at a pastors' conference in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. Within a few days I was driving with my friends across South Africa in a red Nissan pickup truck toward the border. I had waited years for this. What would Mozambique be like?

We had to cross the border before it closed at five o'clock so we could get to our first conference meeting that night, and we were barely going to make it. As we got close our truck faltered. Gas pedal to the floor, our tension mounted, but the engine only missed more and more. "God!" we cried out. "Get this thing moving! You know we have to preach tonight!" Now the truck was crawling and jerking, as though there was water in the fuel line. We coasted into the border station, and our poor engine died altogether. We were going nowhere. But the place was electric. Guards were racing toward the gate. Everyone was shouting. A helicopter settled overhead. "The car ahead of you was shot up by bandits! We're picking up the wounded!" an official yelled at us. Had our engine run, we, too, would have been attacked just across the border. God protected us miraculously right from the beginning.

We pushed our truck around and suddenly the engine ran perfectly. We had two minutes before the border closed, but we waited to drive in convoy. Mozambique's

guerrilla fighters in the bush were desperately poor and survived by preying on lone foreign vehicles. The next morning we had plenty of company and no trouble, but the road to Maputo changed completely. Now we faced monster potholes all the way, and bomb craters. Burned-out and overturned shells of buses and trucks littered the roadside. This had been an intense war zone, and all was not yet peaceful, as we found out the evening before.

The landscape remained dry. In southern Mozambique rainfall is usually thirty inches a year, but there had been drought for three years. Corn stalks were withering in the sandy fields. Finally we got to Maputo, a beautiful little colonial resort town before the war, lined with shady wide streets and situated on a bluff overlooking the ocean. But looking more closely, we saw that Maputo was a shell of what it once was. Little had been built or maintained in two decades. Buildings were run down and gutted. Everywhere was the evidence of a failed economy and a desperate, suffering people. A million refugees camped in huts around the city, displaced by fierce fighting in their home provinces and towns. Tens of thousands were orphans or children ejected from their homes by parents unwilling or unable to take care of them.

I was there to teach, but also to investigate the possibility of getting land for a ministry base. We just wanted a foothold in the country, maybe a small building where we could bring in some street orphans and get started like my grandparents did in China. After just two days, I was approached by a South African electrical contractor doing business in Maputo. He was a “tentmaker,” in Mozambique to minister to the local people. He came right out and asked, “Do you want an orphanage?” His church organization had just been offered one by the government, but they did not have the resources to run it. Would I be interested? Of course!

Amazingly, I found a car to rent, and the next morning gave it a real test. Maputo was full of potholes, but the road out of town to the children’s center at Chihango was an obstacle course of deep mud, sand, water and crumbling tar through a fishing village

along the ocean. I thought this center would be a minor example of emergency childcare among many in a country with so many war orphans. I was soon surprised and deeply shaken to find out that Chihango was the government's best effort at taking care of its abandoned and orphaned children, and the largest such center in Mozambique.

My pastor friend and I drove in and around muddy ponds for miles until we arrived. There were power lines, but they sagged toward the ground barely hanging together. High tension components sparked ominously. Telephone poles stood barren, their lines stolen long ago for copper. We pulled into the compound and up to what might be an administrative center. Children sat around sullenly, staring at us. We found a couple of adults who briefed us on the situation.

Chihango was more like a detention center for delinquents: wild, abandoned, homeless kids, thieves and fighters from the streets that no one wanted, not even the police. There were about eighty of them, living like animals. They defecated on bare floors, and sat there warming tin cans over wood fires. There were no beds, no mattresses, no sheets, no pillows. Every night was spent on the cold cement. They were bloated and covered with sores. They yelled, kicked and fought. The government could bring a bit of food only three months out of the year. They still had to steal and beg.

The buildings were a shell of what the Portuguese had provided decades before. All was completely vandalized. Doors and window sills were chopped up for firewood. Wiring was ripped out of the walls. Window glass was long gone. Roofs were full of holes. Toilets and septic tanks were stopped up and overflowing. Dead rats clogged the leaky water pipes. Well pumps and windmill machinery were rusted out. Light bulbs were gone.

Gangs and bandits roamed the area, shooting up the buildings at night. Witch doctors beat their drums and chanted in the villages all around. We found out later that demons came into the children's rooms to choke and terrorize them. No one could read or write. There was no love, no care, no hope.

And for these Mozambican children there were no prospects either. Russian and German groups had promised help ten years earlier, but they never returned. I had found “the least of these,” the off-scouring of the earth, children who mattered to no one, lives that were worth nothing to anyone as far as they knew.

I was told even by leaders of existing churches in town that paying any attention to these children would be a waste of time. “They’re bad children! You’ll never change them. They’ll never influence anyone. You should work with nice children in the city who go to church and are in school. And you should spend most of your time with pastors and leaders who can change the country!”

I thought of where I had heard such words before. All this was exactly the reasoning my grandfather received from fellow missionaries and local pastors two generations ago in Kunming, China. All these years I had longed for a continuation of *Visions Beyond the Veil*.⁵ But I believed that if I was ever going to see such a wonderful thing, I would have to have God’s value system. He loves to show His heart. He loves to take the things which are not and use them to nullify the things that are. He does not rest until He reaches the utterly lost and lonely. He overturns the worst that Satan can do, and glorifies Himself.

I remembered all this the day I stood at Chihango facing the most pitiful effort to help children I had ever seen. Were these the tools Jesus would use to turn around an entire country? Were these hollow, numb hearts going to be containers of the Most High God? Would generals, presidents, government ministers and businessmen change their lives through the testimonies of these seemingly useless children, now so empty of training, character and virtue?

5. H. A. Baker, *Visions Beyond the Veil* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1973). This book by my grandfather details an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit among poor orphan children in China that became my benchmark for revelation and revival. Its influence on the ministry of Iris Global is described more fully in chapter three.

And how would Heidi and I provide for them? For fifteen years Heidi and I had lived by faith for just our small family. How would we repair and maintain a major institution, and make it an example that would inspire a nation? Where would we get the love, the faith, the endurance to keep going? And there were thousands more children all over Mozambique who were just as desperate.

But I was excited. This was a wonderful test of the gospel. I wanted something to preach to anyone, anywhere. I was convinced that Jesus was enough for this place and for all of Mozambique. And I decided to start at the bottom of society and work up, just like my grandfather did. Chihango was perfect. I would take it.

The Present

In 1995 half of Maputo's two million people were refugees from the war living in huts around the city center. The shops were empty. Hardly any cars were on the road. There were only a few restaurants. There was no Internet service or cellphones. Government departments were disconnected and inconsistent. With a corrupt, untrained and minimal police force, mob justice prevailed. Food of any kind was scarce. Importation of goods was a nightmare. Witchcraft was commonly practiced everywhere in the city and out. Hospitals were hopelessly short of medicine and equipment. Drug dealing was out of control. Violence and shooting happened daily.

Today Maputo has been labeled "the hippest city in southern Africa."⁶ It is jammed with traffic, new shopping centers and hotels, discos and restaurants for every taste and culture, sidewalk cafés, street musicians—and more street children than ever. The Chinese have built a modern airport terminal and World Cup soccer stadium. Its container port is filled with ships. A major aluminum smelting plant has been built that exports all over the world.

6. As noticed in the inflight magazine of South African Airways, and others.

The country of Mozambique now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, one that has grown at an average annual rate of 6%–8% in the decade up to 2012.⁷ Business investors, especially Chinese, are pouring in. Vast coal deposits have been found in central Mozambique, and offshore gas in northern Mozambique. Internet and cellphone coverage is rapidly expanding. Satellite TV is ubiquitous in the cities. Import restrictions have greatly eased. Property values have skyrocketed. It is again a tourist destination of choice for the adventurous who appreciate its unspoiled coastline and wilderness. Game parks are being established. Big-five wildlife is returning.

Iris Ministries, now renamed Iris Global, has become the largest single group of churches in the nation, with some 10,000 churches that consider themselves part of “Ministério Arco-Íris.”⁸ These are intricately networked under local pastors, district pastors, provincial pastors, commissioners and national directors. We care for thousands of children in our various centers and through a system of church-based orphan care in bush villages.⁹

Iris Global is spreading into many nations around the world as more and more pioneers with missionary hearts and our Iris “DNA” move out to bear even more fruit beginning in each place again with “the least of these.” We now operate five Bible schools and nine bases, and have been running our ten-week missions school, called “Harvest School,” twice a year, with students from dozens of nations. We have hundreds of churches in South Africa and Malawi, and our most intense front lines now are in DR Congo and South Sudan. We also have an arm called “Iris Relief,” which is

7. Current, detailed statistics are provided at: “Mozambique,” *African Economic Outlook*, last updated September 6, 2013, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/southern-africa/mozambique/>.

8. We are not motivated to be technical and fastidious about our “membership numbers.” At various times we have had provincial and national leadership conferences during which we have laboriously tallied our churches. Our last such effort was in 2007 when we counted a total of about 7,000 churches. Since then we have added many, and there has also been attrition due to moral failures, financial corruption, the offers of other groups, etc. Iris has both wheat and tares.

9. Again, we have estimated upwards of 10,000 children in our care in Mozambique, as well as many others at Iris bases around the world.

increasingly involved in disaster zones such as the aftermaths of earthquakes in Haiti and Japan.

The percentage of Christians in Mozambique has nearly doubled since 1995 to more than fifty-one percent, according to a 2007 census conducted by Mozambique's National Institute of Statistics.¹⁰ The National Directorate of Religious Affairs reports that evangelical Christians are the fastest-growing religious group in the country.¹¹ We do not have the reporting or communication capacity—or desire—to count our “members,” but we are a spiritual and political force in all ten of Mozambique's provinces. Christianity, through Iris and many other Christian agencies, has had a major impact on the country. The once-Marxist government now puts no restrictions on Christian activity. Because of a history of harsh conditions and persecution, religious cults are not nearly as common in Mozambique as in most African countries. Competitive denominationalism is virtually unknown in the bush.

However, in spite of all these dramatic changes to Mozambique since 1995, conditions have hardly changed where seventy percent of the people live—in the bush. Most of the population lives in mud/grass/stick huts with not much more than a rope bed, several old changes of clothes, an iron pot and a mat to sleep on. Life is excruciatingly slow. Death is all around. Education and medical care are nonexistent. Food is eked out of the ground in backyard plots without irrigation, fertilization, storage facilities or metal implements. The weather is unpredictable, but usually dry, and cattle cannot be sustained. Chickens are a rare treat. Coca-cola is saved for Christmas and ultra-special occasions, if it can be found at all. Villagers usually have to walk for hours to fetch a jug of water. Thirst and hunger are constant. In the bush no one has telephones, cameras or televisions.

10. “The 2007 census in Mozambique and its organization,” *Census Knowledge Base*, February 26, 2008, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/censuskb20/KnowledgebaseArticle10342.aspx>.

11. “International Religious Freedom Report 2010: Mozambique,” The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, November 17, 2010, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148708.htm>.

There is no electricity, and no one has flashlights or even candles for lighting. They are extremely isolated, with no knowledge of the outside world and all that is going on internationally. They have no concept of Israel or the Arab/Jew conflict. They have no idea what politics and economics are all about.

But it is in the bush where Iris has seen its greatest growth by far, a people movement that has exceeded all expectations by an order of magnitude. Our first faltering efforts with street children in Maputo soon developed into a great family of hundreds, and then God kept blessing us with volunteers, support, donated property, construction teams and short-term missionaries from all over the world. Dormitories for children became classrooms for Bible school students. Pastors begging to receive the Holy Spirit like our little children became filled and empowered to go out, heal the sick and raise the dead. They preached the gospel and signs and wonders followed. Desperation for God was hugely intensified by floods, famine and epidemics. We responded to extreme demand for the knowledge of God by pioneering “bush conferences” all over the country using our Cessna 206 light airplane. And our churches grew from hundreds in the south to thousands in province after province.

Our course changed drastically in 2002 when Jesus specifically told Heidi to “go get His Makua bride.”¹² We did not know who the Makua were, or where they lived until we did Internet research. They were a people group of over four million, mostly in the northernmost province of Cabo Delgado. We were warned that they were a hardened, syncretistic, “unreached” group almost impervious to the gospel. But from our first visit to the province’s main town of Pemba in 2002, starting with no believers at all, we have grown to almost 3,000 churches among the Makua.¹³ New churches are started every week, precipitated by the preaching of the gospel, signs and wonders, and the pure, plain

12. Detailed in our online newsletters at <http://www.irisglobal.org>.

13. The count goes up weekly as our evangelistic outreach teams go out to the bush with the aim of establishing churches every five kilometers. Our last count in July 2013 was around 2,700 churches in the province of Cabo Delgado.

love of God expressed through warmth, kindness, honor and every kind of practical help we can provide. We have learned that all resistance fades when people see and understand that Jesus is real, powerful and full of love for them.

The Future

Challenges remain huge. Teaching and character development are critical. We have five Bible schools for bush pastors filled to capacity with eager new students who keep pouring in from the bush eager to learn the Word of God and to be anointed all the more. But we know by much experience that revival is messy and complex. Cultural issues and the sin nature wreak as much havoc here as anywhere. Miracles are not everything. Jesus is everything.

So the context of this writing project is an astonishing and humbling people movement engineered sovereignly by the Holy Spirit, but one which illuminates all the more how far we human beings have to go, even in revival, to know our God in the beauty of holiness. We have major ground to cover to deal with not only the poverty of the land, especially in the bush, but also the spiritual forces of darkness that constantly threaten to derail this movement or at least significantly impede its progress.

However, the positive aspects of God's work among us far outweigh anything Satan has done. We have both wheat and tares, but the glorious harvest we have seen reveals just the fruit that our hearts have longed to see all our lives, fruit that is whetting the appetite of revival seekers around the world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

THE SPIRITUAL ADVENTURES OF PURSUING REVIVAL IN CABO DELGADO, MOZAMBIQUE

Despite the explicit emphasis on the essential elements of missions outreach as described in the New Testament—for example, presenting the Kingdom of God in the revelatory power of God, living by faith (the immediate “hearing” and obeying of the Word of God in the heart), and, above all, in the intimacy of love and communication with Jesus—traditional missions tends to operate within a more secular mindset.¹

This secularized approach often involves elaborate theories of “contextualization,” which seek to understand and identify with the target culture.² In an effort to avoid being “culture bound” or offensive to another culture, the Christian message can be so reframed that it loses its meaning and power: the missionary can become more “converted” than the object of the mission. The process of “building bridges” to another culture can take up all of the resources that could have gone to the presentation of the gospel. One must be aware that the New Testament principle of becoming “incarnational” in missions may diverge in principle and practice from the more modern notion of becoming “contextual.”

The secularized approach also characteristically avoids the core New Testament element of gospel presentation, that is, “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

1. As contrasted with the emphases within the “mission” mandates of Matt. 10; Mark 6; Luke 9 and 10, as well as Matt. 28:19–20 and Acts 1:8.

2. A. R. V. Raj, “Global Mission: Reflections and Case Studies in Contextualization for the Whole Church,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 4 (October 2012): 220–221. Darrell L. Whiteman, “Contextualization: The Theory, The Gap, The Challenge,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 1 (January 1997): 1–12.

The summaries of the apostolic gospel of power are ignored (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:5) in favor of more politically correct “persuasive words of wisdom.” Missions, in this model, becomes a matter of articulating responses to a competing set of concepts or ideologies.

Gary McGee, Assemblies of God professor of church history and pentecostal studies, argues strenuously and at length, with many others, that

Despite the reservations of Western academics, paranormal phenomena have indeed played a vital role in the growth of Christianity, although whether in every local context and to what extent must still be determined. Far from being peripheral, they explain much about the acceptance of the faith by native peoples whose non-Western patterns of reasoning paralleled that of the audiences to whom the apostles and Gregory Thaumaturgus preached.³

This is true. Mission history cannot be accurately written without acknowledging the activity of God through the miraculous. McGee’s article abounds with examples of how missions accounts have been “cleansed” of references to the miraculous, and therefore fail to apprehend a meaningful, accurate and full-bodied attribution of ministry “success” to God Himself. There is no possible explanation of the existence and growth of Iris Global in Mozambique apart from the miraculous. For this writer, argumentation over cessationism is a non-issue, for all my life I have been aware of God’s supernatural presence and have borne witness to countless manifestations of God’s love expressed through supernatural power.

Mainstream Evangelical Missions Discussion

Although I am privileged with a rich heritage from my pentecostal pioneer grandfather, H. A. Baker, I have also been exposed throughout my formative years to the influences of the classic, great evangelical missionaries of church history. I eagerly and hungrily read the biographies of C. T. Studd, Hudson Taylor, William Carey, etc., as well as the stories of famed pentecostal Assemblies of God missionaries of our family’s

3. Gary McGee, “Miracles and Mission Revisited,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 4 (October 2001): 147–156.

tradition. Later, as I pursued theological studies and began ministry in my twenties, I made myself familiar with the missiological contributions of well-known figures at such institutions as the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission and the U.S. Center for World Mission, both in Pasadena, California. These personalities include Ralph Winter, Donald McGavran, Charles Kraft, Peter Wagner, Paul Hiebert, Samuel Escobar and David Hesselgrave. I make efforts to keep up with their more recent writings, as well as others that contribute to the discussion of the “state of the art” in contemporary missions.⁴

While some of these writers—the small minority—mount an apologetic for acceptance of a charismatic worldview, it is our overall impression that the majority of modern missiological thinking produces what is little more than an elaborate contingency plan for what to do if God does not show up and activate His power. The part He plays in advancing His Kingdom on earth is hardly under discussion. Missiology then becomes a study of cultural anthropology, sociology, strategic planning, contextualized discipleship programs, efficient use of the avenues of modern media and communication, prioritized goals, etc., and in general whatever the Church can do on its own to accomplish the Great Commission in our generation. That accomplishment then becomes the goal of our efforts on which our hearts are set.

Much contemporary missiological discussion, however, does not even concentrate on that evangelical mandate, but rather on increased “inclusiveness,” interfaith dialog, acceptance and understanding of other belief systems, and an overwhelming emphasis on the horizontal dimension of the Christian life as expressed through social, educational and developmental programs, etc. Liberation theology, with its militant emphasis on taking up the cause of the poor, but without the powerful intervention of God, is a long-

4. Such as Timothy C. Tennant, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010); Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009); Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

standing example of struggling for transformation without dependence on the actual presence of God. What is most significantly at risk here is the simplistic but utterly crucial understanding that we are not saved unless our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus. The vertical component of our life in Christ is prior. We then love the one we can see in order to love the One we cannot see.

One extremely consequential component of missiological discussion in our contemporary world is the “Insider Movement” and its advancement of the concept of “Chrislam.” More and more evangelical missions agencies and denominations are urging among their missionaries an approach that emphasizes not a confrontation with the Islamic world, but an embracing of what Christians and Moslems have in common, e.g., belief in one God, love of neighbor, etc. The result is that missionaries are being urged not to think in terms of converting (wrenching!) others from one religion and culture to another, but introducing Jesus and His ways *within* another religion and culture. Some major seeker-sensitive megachurch leaders and others of the “Insider Movement” have even introduced “Chrislam” conferences, where Christians and Moslems can come together to celebrate their commonalities.⁵

Fundamentally, typical conservative evangelical missiology is procedural and methodological, but intentionally rooted in theology that produces a message revealed by God. Culture then becomes the arena of missions, and the social sciences become a second layer of missiology that informs missionaries of the cultural context of their ministries that must be taken into consideration. Then the formulation of Christian strategy becomes the final tier of missiology, subordinated to the sovereign will of God

5. One leading protest to this trend is the work of Joshua Lingel, the executive director of i2 Ministries, which trains students and missionaries globally in Christian apologetics to Islam. Website at <http://i2ministries.org>. A detailed study of this trend is offered in Joshua Lingel, Jeff Morton and Bill Nikides, eds., *Chrislam: How Missionaries Are Promoting an Islamized Gospel* (Garden Gove, CA: i2 Ministries Publications, 2011).

for the purpose of bringing to pass the will of God in a particular cultural context.⁶ We in Iris Global deeply appreciate the wealth of understanding that has already been so thoroughly advanced, and rejoice in the tremendous breadth of foundational work that has been accomplished by evangelical missionaries around the world. Their conviction, dedication, hard work and sacrifice have borne fruit that we have seen around the world, from the earliest days of Christian mission in China to the many tools they have provided us in Africa.⁷

We do not suggest that the fruit of evangelical missions efforts are not the result of God's sovereign power. We acknowledge that all good things come from His hand. But as we state repeatedly throughout this thesis, we are extremely hungry for more. We are sustained and motivated by such hunger that can only be satisfied by the increased presence of God and our experience of Him. Neither sound doctrine, elaborate strategy nor a proliferation of miraculous power are enough. Our hearts need to be filled. We must find that secret place where we dwell in Jesus, becoming one with Him. The desires of our hearts are given to us as we delight in Him. Relationship is everything. We join with God in His mission to the world, but He remains our goal.

6. This thoroughly representative, evangelical, and for us traditional understanding of the discipline of missiology is developed at great length and presented online at <http://www.missiology.org> by Missiology.org, a ministry dedicated to providing resources for missions education.

7. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of what traditional evangelical missionary efforts have provided us in Africa. Discipleship coursebooks, Bible translations, solar Bibles, the Jesus Film, missionary aviation, farming and development programs, schools, etc., have all been of immense value to the Kingdom in our part of the world.

The State of the Art in Iris Global

Iris Global strives to “contextualize” by demonstrating the love of God for the poor, not only through the more traditional eleemosynary and humanitarian expressions, but also via the normative New Testament “power of God unto salvation” in healings, deliverance from demonic power and the infilling of the Spirit in all its variety.

The ministry that my wife Heidi and I founded in Mozambique in 1995 has concentrated particularly for the last ten years in the previously Moslem province of Cabo Delgado in the northeast corner of Mozambique near Tanzania. Our ambition in coming to the poorest nation in the world at that time was to see a continuation of the revival that my grandfather witnessed among children in China in the 1920s, and which later spread among the poor and forgotten of minority tribes in remote and mountainous regions of southern Yunnan Province.⁸

For us pursuing revival has been transformed from a grim and arduous discipline into a joyful and exciting adventure in the power of God, despite unspeakably challenging obstacles and testings. We cannot help but tell of the great things God has done and what we have learned and are learning as a result.

But at this point we need to briefly address the controversial issue of whether revival is normal and to be pursued.

Is revival normal?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, written in the 1640s by English and Scottish clerics and theologians to teach Christian doctrine to lay persons, is recognized as one of

8. The story of the outpouring of God’s Spirit on his orphanage children is told in H. A. Baker, *Visions Beyond the Veil* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1973). His subsequent participation in a major outpouring among the minority Ka Do tribe in the remote mountains of southwest Yunnan Province in China is described in H. A. Baker’s book, *God in Ka Do Land*, available as a pdf file at <http://www.irisglobal.org/pdf/God-in-Ka-Do-Land.pdf>.

the grandest spiritual statements to come out of the English Reformation.⁹ It is composed of 107 questions and answers, and the most famous is the first:

Q. What is the chief end of man?
 A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

After thirty years of missionary work, Heidi and I understand more than ever that God wants to be our greatest pleasure. He is most pleased with us when we are most pleased with Him. And when He is pleased with us, He grants us the desires of our heart (Ps. 37:4).

Our whole aim as Christians, and as Iris missionaries, is to glorify God by everything we think, feel, say and do. For us this finds expression particularly through ministry to the poor, and to “the least of these.” By giving the cup of cold water, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, inviting the stranger in, healing the sick and visiting those in prison we love and serve Jesus Himself (Matt. 25).

But there is more. We do this through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. And here begins the controversy. There is an attitude that sees fiery revival and a life of miracles as the rare exception, not to be expected in normal Christian living. The idea is that most of what God does in the world is done in a natural way through the holy virtues of dedication, hard work, faithful endurance, sacrifice, generosity and compassion, etc. We should learn to live most of the time without the miraculous, overpowering intervention of God, and prove our love for God by our quality of character.

We understand that our foundation is the righteousness of God, freely given to us in Christ. But then we learn that to love God and appreciate Him is to long for His Presence. Here we make a decision. As in any love affair, we love everything about God, and we choose to treasure any way in which He manifests Himself. We continually desire more of God, and will never settle for distance from Him. The great outpourings of the

9. Listed at <http://westminstershortercatechism.net>.

Holy Spirit in history are beacons to us, always giving us hope for an even more abundant life in Him. They are not meant to be hopelessly out of reach for the rest of us, but to spur us on to all that is possible in God.

So we enjoy the full spectrum of God's dealings with us, and are always pressing forward to what lies ahead: even more of God. Jesus died so that our relationship with God could become natural. All that He is capable of supernaturally should become natural and normal for His people.

Our point is that all the good work we have been able to do in this movement in Africa has been sparked, fueled and sustained by the fire of revival and the supernatural. We never could have gotten to this point—10,000 churches and 10,000 children—without miracles all the way. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes (Luke 12:23). The Holy Spirit gives us rivers of living water that flow out of our innermost being. We love and enjoy all the manifestations of God's presence, and find that as we take more and more pleasure in God, we are filled with all the more strength and motivation to do His will through good works.

We do what we do because of visitations, visions and heavy doses of His Spirit. We are excited and keep going because the dead are being raised and the blind and deaf are being healed.¹⁰ The poor come to Jesus whole villages at a time because they see the power of God's love. We are financed because God grants supernatural generosity to thousands of people without appeals from us. We are awed and thrilled that God would tangibly enter our meetings, touch our bodies and fill us to overflowing with love and joy—inexpressible and full of glory. We are on fire because He does more than we ask or think.

10. Examples will be described in narrative form in chapter five.

It is very simple. We desperately need revival, all the time. Heidi and I would both be dead now without miraculous healing.¹¹ We face need, pain and suffering every day that cry out for more than any human can give. Our own hearts pant for the living God like the deer pants for streams of water (Ps. 42:1). We are made for God. We are made for revival. We are made for the glory of His Presence. We must encounter Him.

So we say, More revival! More fire! More signs and wonders! More gifts of the Spirit! More intimacy! More love and joy! More fruit! Let us find every lost sheep! Let us take in every orphan! Let us share the Kingdom! And never settle for average, mundane “normal!”

In short, let us totally enjoy our God!

Revival has fruit. It brings transformation of a complete kind, and God uses people to bring it. We are not just soul winners, and not just social workers. We are after the Kingdom. For us revival includes relief and development, with a difference. We trust God and aim for His glory in everything. He is utterly practical. We are establishing model communities as examples for the rest of our movement. We are emphasizing micro-investment and entrepreneurship. We are drilling all the water wells we can in bush villages. We have housing projects. We are expanding agriculture. We are founding a university to offer the poor an education that provides job skills in tourism, business and information technology. We offer a child sponsorship program without financial appeals to provide an outlet for those who want to help us take in even more children. We have a beginning relief arm of Iris that responds increasingly to disasters around the world.

11. Heidi has faced blood poisoning, double pneumonia, chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple sclerosis and terminal MRSA infection. I have faced advanced cerebral malaria, strokes and terminal dementia. We are both alive and active today due to miraculous healing. These testimonies are described in our books and newsletters.

Ministry projects

We recognize the legitimacy of projects of all kinds in the ministry. We make projects out of learning to fly airplanes, repairing boat engines, ordering well drilling equipment, importing solar Bibles, finishing Bible translations, putting together sound systems for the bush, cooking Christmas dinner for 4,000 children, etc.

But we cannot make a project out of accessing God and His power, or catalyzing revival. We are misguided if we think we can devise a proven, replicable method to accomplish what only God can do. This writing project attempts to express a relationship with God that does not claim anything as coming from ourselves. Even the successful outcomes of our “ordinary” projects, such as those listed above, are gifts from God.

The seminary world needs a hunger for God that vastly exceeds its desire to achieve competency and effectiveness through sociological research. The way forward for ministry education is lower still, and then even lower. We as ministers are absolutely nothing without God. Jesus is all we need, and everything we need. A broken and contrite spirit He will not despise (Ps. 51). All that has happened in Iris Global in Mozambique these past seventeen years has served to prove that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.

We in Iris have been inundated with offers of discipleship programs from all over the world. Many teachers and groups have offered to come to Mozambique to help us implement their “amazingly effective” programs all over our country that have been proven across India, South America, etc. We are talking about sophisticated, detailed, precise programs with thick manuals designed to be followed closely for years. We have even tried some, and been severely criticized for not following them exactly.

But the purpose of our writing is not to prove that one program is more effective than another, or to produce a new and superior one with which to replace all others. We are not trying to prove that our methodology in Mozambique is effective, whatever it is.

We are not attempting research that will unearth a key to church growth and missiological explosion. We are not purporting to “learn how” to do missions and revival, much less to teach it. We in Iris do not claim to have “accomplished” the people movement we have seen in Africa. We are in wonder. We are in shock. We are amazed by God. And we are also nearly crushed by our own weaknesses. We know who we are. We are royalty, adopted by our Father in heaven with rights and privileges, but we are also utterly dependent on Him, and pride of achievement is not becoming of us. “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17 NIV11).

The tendency of discipleship programs is to reduce relationship to impersonal procedure and discipline, narrow and rigid at that. The language is in scripture, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7); “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:3); and “Make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). But understanding requires eyes to see and ears to hear, which most of Jesus’ hearers did not have. It requires the Spirit, who sheds abroad in our hearts a love we would not trade for anything (S of Songs 8).

So this is not a project to find out what “works.” It is more of a blog relating our spiritual adventures and what we have learned from our relationship with God as He has been working among us, particularly in the northernmost province of Cabo Delgado in the last ten years. As stated in the last chapter, this province was considered unreached by missiological scholars, and we regularly heard from professional missionaries that we were wasting our time going there. But we followed the voice of God, delegated our work in southern Mozambique to others in Iris, and moved north into a completely unknown future. The province was overwhelmingly Moslem then, but almost three thousand churches later, Moslems are a minority, and we are adding churches almost every week.

We can explain what we have done, what we do, and what we plan to do, we can tell of the works of the Lord, we can confess our failures and weaknesses, and list the

problems and inconsistencies of our movement. We can describe how we would like to respond to particular issues, and we can also express total helplessness in addressing other issues. But we cannot come up with a clean, tight, organized program that “works,” and we could never require other teachers and disciplers to use our “method.” We cannot prove that what has happened has been the result of our discipleship programs.

What do we mean by a program “working?” Of course many programs, religious or not, could be shown to have beneficial results of many kinds short of what we would call “revival.” But we have an insatiable desire for more. We cannot spend time writing books and laboring for less than our true hearts’ desire.

The fact is, what we have seen in Mozambique cannot be produced by precision scholarship and ministerial “competence,” although of course God can use those. People in the bush of Africa respond to the gospel because they are hungry for God. They do not care about a minister’s training or competence. They do not wade through waist-deep, crocodile-infested water and mud all day to get to church because it has a well-organized training program and a thorough series of Bible studies. They go because they heard “Jesus is in town!” Pastors do not charge off for a hundred miles in all directions barefoot and without food for weeks to start churches in every village because they were trained to do so in a class. They are on fire! Nobody tells them to do this! Wild horses could not stop them! It is as though they have Holy Spirit nuclear energy exploding inside. They cry with Paul, “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24), and, “I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Col. 1:29).

People are love-starved and joy-starved all over the world for actual encounter with God, but they settle for seeker-sensitivity and programs because they are not aware of anything better. We are hungry for God to crash in on people and utterly overwhelm them with a goodness they never knew existed. No revival movement in history was

triggered by moderate, predictable, highly organized, competent religious planning. God is a passionate, jealous lover who delights to show Himself in power to those who fear Him, delight in Him and utterly lay themselves down before Him in total dependence and obedience. We are sustained not by ability, competence, achievement and position, but by hunger! How do we bestow a D.Min. for hunger? Ministers are to demonstrate going low and slow. The apostolic is the lowest position of all. It took Moses forty years to become humble enough for God to use him to the degree He wanted. That is ministry training.

We have no idea how to design a program that can be proven to consistently produce the kind of encounter with God that we live for in Iris Global. Over the years we have become less confident in ourselves, not more. Now that we are more aware of what God can do in a meeting, we are more struck than ever by our inability to make Him do it again. It is not about us and our training, though God uses it all. It is about faith, throwing our whole weight on Him. We now measure meetings not by how well we do as ministers, but by what God does. When we face the poor and suffering in the bush of Africa, we are only counting on one thing: that God will show up and help the desperate who know how much they need Him.

We cannot program desperation, hunger, humility, affection and worship. Yes, we have Bible classes so people will know the Word of God, but it is the Holy Spirit who wields that Word like a sword, not us. We cannot program Him. We can try to convey what we learned, for example, from watching the Holy Spirit sweep over thousands of people in the hot sun and blowing dust of an African field until no one could stand in the billowing, overpowering glory cloud that was over us all. Children were rolling in the dirt lost in visions of heaven; adults were shouting, crying and shaking; the worship team was flat on their faces; prophecy flowed like a stream; we were taken to a new realm en masse; healings were spontaneous. It was not a discipleship class or lesson. It was not anything we could replicate at will. It was not any demonstration of competence in

ministry.¹² The question is, what constitutes preparation for ministry and an effective seminary education?

The action research model needs to give way to a more open, needy and hungry approach. It is not about learning how to do ministry. It is about seeking His face with empty hands. And then once we have experienced His gracious response, we cannot take credit for what He does. We should not be awarding ministry degrees to people on the basis of the expertise they have acquired—or even the experimental success they have achieved, but perhaps it should be more about recognizing what God has graciously allowed them to experience in Him. We should not be requiring students to demonstrate effectiveness, but rather to recognize what God has done and give Him glory.

What we can do is try to share what we have learned of God's ways. He is in no way constrained by our boxes. He has personality and particularity. He likes to break out spontaneously, not on cue. He does not have to conform to our discipleship models. He does not have to respond as we are accustomed. He is not predictable. He is not boring. He is infinitely better, more exciting, more surprising, more refreshing than we think. Our meeting formats do not have to endlessly repeat a pattern. Worship, preaching and altar calls do not have to follow an order. We do not have to reduce seeking His face to so many chapters of Bible reading and so many hours of prayer, though Bible reading and prayer are basic. We do not even attribute power and effectiveness to fasting and prayer per se. These can become impersonal practices that are a far cry from real faith, love and relationship. We are not in love with "proximal intercessory prayer," for example, and other passionless expressions of spiritual activity. God alone has power, not our practices. He is a person, and should be treated as a person, not just a power source.

What can God do, both in our private lives with Him and in our corporate gatherings? We have only seen the tip of an iceberg. He brings life. He is romance.

12. This happened in one of our conferences at our Iris base in Dondo, near the central Mozambican city of Beira, in October of 2001.

Discipleship programs can point to Him, but they do not bring life. We must find Him, know Him, taste Him, eat and drink Him, become one spirit with Him. We cannot make that happen; our program cannot make that happen. It is impossible to overstate our nothingness apart from His grace and self-revelation.

Our first aim in any teaching/preaching/discipleship situation is to not get in God's way, but to let the Spirit flow freely. Every meeting is a fresh, new learning experience. We do not at all feel bound by our manuals or course materials. We want to speak what the Spirit has to say in any given moment, or give way to what the Spirit is doing in a meeting. We are not the critical, important, controlling voice. We would just as soon watch as the Holy Spirit does the hard work of softening hearts and then filling them to overflowing.

God's variety in relating to human beings is as astonishing as His creative variety in nature. There is no way to package a discipleship course in such a way that it is appropriate for every leader and group. In Iris we have many missionaries, teachers and guest speakers, each with different personalities and emphases. We can make suggestions and try to be helpful, but we do not require closely following any curriculum. We do have course books, and are always looking for better ones—and time to write better ones—but there is vastly more life in the Spirit that people are starving for than can be contained in a course book. We do not presume to know or direct what each teacher should teach, but try to be sensitive to the general flow and direction of a school or group and make changes if we feel the need. Any program would wither if forced on other teachers, or even ourselves. Discipleship is a living process, dancing, glowing and sparkling with life, colors and flavors. We are constantly seeing and comprehending with new eyes, forgetting what lies behind and pressing forward to what lies ahead.

So bound by training manuals and course books are many discipleship programs that students lose touch with our primary spiritual source: the Bible. Most of the time rather than teach from textbooks and outlines, we stay in the scriptures and aim to feed

the people the simplest, purest and most direct words we can. The Bible is our discipleship manual. It requires coherent understanding and interpretation, but it is impossible to improve on its expressions of life in God. Many African students from the bush want a simple book of teachings they can work through, and we have many teachers who can accommodate them. But we aim to fill in the blanks and feed the people the Word of God in ways that the basic outlines miss. Why do we have a Bible if we have the Spirit? What is inspiration? Why do we have old and new testaments? What are law and grace? But there is so much more. What does it mean to be in love with God? To know Him? To delight in him? What is faith? What is His will? Can we change and improve on it? Is He in control? What is prayer? What is discipleship? The questions continue endlessly, and we cannot simply write a manual and stay with it. We must continually explore new directions and answers to ongoing questions. Designing and implementing a program we and others have to stay with would be stultifying, to us at least.

We do have sustaining core values that we have held onto through all the intense opposition and trials we have been through, and for these we will die. They are fundamental to our understanding of life in God, controversial as they are. And for us they hold true regardless of how much or uniformly they are received by our very diverse staff and churches. It is extraordinary to us how God has knit our churches together into a family over huge distances with very primitive communication and little personal contact over the years apart from our “bush conferences” that we have been able to organize through travel by bush plane. We truly cannot attribute this to our thorough discipleship training methods or ability to communicate core values clearly and firmly. However, we do have many Bible schools, and through the giftings of a great variety of teachers we impart as much as we can to hundreds of new bush pastors and students every three months.¹³ Our core values have been what we as parent figures for the whole of Iris

13. We received strategy from the Lord regarding Bible school structure. Rather than take potential pastors away from their homes in bush villages for several years, we school them at our bases for three months at a time once each year for four years. That way they spend less continuous time away from

Global have received ourselves from the Lord, and in that sense these values have made us stabilizing factors for the whole movement.

The energizing motivation for this writing project is to express and defend these values so as to encourage and strengthen other ministry leaders. We can describe how they have played out in our lives as Iris leaders, and relate how God has responded to us as we have clung to these values, but we cannot claim to have found replicable methods to produce results similar to what we have witnessed in Mozambique.

Impartation of these values is a gift from and function of the Holy Spirit. We can teach them, but results belong to God.

We are very circumspect about the efficacy of our teaching. In the early years of Iris, before my wife Heidi and I arrived in Mozambique, God was using young teenage believers like Surprise Sithole, now our national director, powerfully in the bush. All Surprise did for his first few years as a Christian was walk into every village he could and simply preach John 3:16 in the streets and marketplaces. He had no developed plan, no program, and almost no further knowledge of the Bible. But his ministry was astoundingly miraculous as he founded church after church in the midst of a war zone environment and terrible poverty.¹⁴ We recognize God's power and sovereignty, and not our own understanding and methods. God has given us many strategies and tools as our churches have grown in number, but our trust is in Him personally. As soon as we depersonalize our relationship with Him and focus on our ministry activity we have lost our way. Our eyes must be on Him and only Him.

To us discipleship means ministering to people in the power of the Spirit with the result that they fall in love with God. Falling in love takes no effort. It should not be aroused or awakened until it so desires (Song of Songs). Romance with God is infinite

their people, and are able to put into practice what they have learned as they progress through our certificate program.

14. His outstanding example and breathtaking testimonies are told in Surprise Sithole, with David Wimbish, *Voice in the Night* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen Books, 2012).

and glorious, the mystery of all mysteries, and would not be traded for anything. Our relationship with our God and Maker is His greatest creation, not the function of our operation, program or ability. The particulars of falling in love are as varied as human beings, and cannot be programmed. God alone knows how to love us as we need to be loved, and His ways of winning hearts are exquisite and beyond our grasp unless He apprehends us with His Spirit.

The shift from trusting in our own preaching, teaching and methods to throwing our whole weight on God can be a long and traumatic process that God in His mercy engineers. Paul the Apostle was pressed to the point of despairing of life in his efforts to minister the gospel, and his explanation was that “this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9). If there were better, easier and more direct ways to bring us to total dependence on Him, we believe God would use them.

Obviously God is able to make full use of the natural giftings, talents and abilities He has placed in each of us, but it has been highly significant for us to observe over time how God uses people in ways that establish without doubt that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Cor. 4:7). We truly are jars of clay. We in Iris know with the highly educated and knowledgeable Paul what it is to be hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. Our self-confidence is continually and daily flattened. There is no way we can boast in our teaching and discipleship methods. Our sanctification flags, our irritation rises, our tiredness takes over and we have no answers for the staggering problems we face every day. We have no program to pull out of a hat to save the day, no textbook to show the way, no manual to lead us step-by-step out of the valley of the shadow of death. We have only one choice: to look into the face of our perfect Savior and to trust Him even more.

A way forward

We do have suggestions for the education of ministers in the Holy Spirit. It should be an adventure. It should occur in an atmosphere of freedom with a minimum of control. It should be playful and fun, which provides ability to endure weight and gravity. Recent articles have pointed out the need for scientific research to be carried out more like a game. More brain and computer power have been devoted to gaming than to nearly any other computer activity. The opportunity for free spontaneity does not stifle mental processes, but rather stimulates them. Heavy structure and pressure are not as fruitful as space for creativity and voluntary effort. The greatest achievements of mankind's scientists, musicians, artists, poets and inventors were accomplished voluntarily by those who were self-motivated and who enjoyed their work immensely.

How much more should growing in God and in one's anointing for ministry be the great and grand adventure of our lives, the most free and thrilling activity we can imagine? We should be constantly playing, experimenting, thinking, changing, trying different things, backing up, trying other things, asking, hungering, exploring, considering, learning, confessing—with no ambition to impress except to please God with our childlike love and trust. In a light-hearted yet utterly serious way we can do action research constantly, but without any pressure whatsoever to prove our own ability. As God's children we are learning by experience to enjoy His power and presence as a down payment on the powers of the age to come.

This is an account of our Iris adventure in pursuing revival in Cabo Delgado these past ten years—our activities, our joys, our miracles, our disasters, our sufferings, our lessons and changes of direction, our experiments, the ins and outs of maintaining our core values. That adventure has included a concerted effort to minister our core values specifically to our leading pastors in the province, and to our Bible school fifth-year

“MMs,” our Mozambican missionaries—a tried and true group of leaders who continue to train with us as graduates of our four-year schools.

What we cannot do is produce a rigid, set-in-cement discipleship program that can be proven to produce the results that our hearts long for. We can diligently seek Him in every way possible in freedom and joy, using all our God-given capacities, and report on His responses and our experiences in Him, but we resist cold formality and any temptation to take credit for the love, peace and joy we have in the Holy Spirit. We are incredibly hungry for more of God, and I can only write to express that hunger, not my ability to minister.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIVE CORE VALUES OF IRIS GLOBAL

Theoretically, Christian ministry should proceed on the basis of accurate, reliable theology. Ideally, that theology should be systematic; that is, it should provide a consistent body of understandings that takes into account all we know about God and His ways.¹ Our desire to know Him as well as possible should take precedence over all other priorities. We must honestly face the question of what it means to do “Christian” ministry, and more fundamentally, what prepares and qualifies us to do it in the name of our God. The tendency to avoid theology in the interests of being “practical” puts us at risk of losing our way and putting an incoherent and misleading face on our ministry. The only impractical or irrelevant theology is untrue theology, whereas Truth is always life-giving and the only way forward. It is not enough to be “practical.” We have a responsibility for “articulating the meaning and implications of the church’s claims for the truth of the Christian gospel.”² What could be more practical than knowing God better?

Faith Seeking Understanding

Therefore this project is concerned not just with practice, but with the understanding that underlies and supports that practice. With Anselm we hold that faith is

1. Colin Gunton at King’s College, University of London, provides clarity in his introductory discussion of historical and systematic theology, which are both concerned with the content of Christian teaching. Each needs the other. To understand history requires some systematic awareness, and how we regard history affects our understanding of faith today. Firstly, if our faith is true and rational, we need consistency of *some kind* among our various doctrines. This is not just a theoretical concern, for Christian theology is concerned with practice, since we are dealing with the gospel of God’s *action* in Christ Jesus on earth. And so systematic theology must be integrated with ethics and ecclesiology. Colin Gunton, “Historical and systematic theology,” in *The Cambridge Guide to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–20.

2. Ibid., 3.

a divine gift, an ontological entity prior to reason that is dependent on grace, but also that all faith is by nature in search of rational understanding.³ The danger of sectarian seminary education and practice is that hunger for further understanding may be suffocated by static theology. For us pursuing God in His service translates immediately into applying all our being to gaining greater understanding in utter humility, appreciating why Daniel was so esteemed:

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. (Daniel 10:10–12 NIV11)

In fact, for us, new insight is exhilarating, the fruit of our labors, the possibility of which is the attraction of every new day and pursuit. There is always more to understand.

The source of understanding

At issue here is our conception of reason, and there are differences among philosophical theologians concerning what reason is able to do *on its own*. For this reason we have various flavors of “natural” and “revealed” theology. Then we have the question of the relation of theology to its sources, i.e., scripture, tradition, experience, testimony, etc. Academic scholarship in the field of ministry has a tendency to impinge on discussion of these issues because of frequent a priori delimitation of acceptable sources.

The attitude of this project is that, in view of what is at stake, e.g., eternal life and the judgment to come, any and all sources should be considered, however humble or unlikely. Too much is at risk if we become impervious to evidence that does not meet our academic standards. Our insatiable, unremitting desire for understanding will not be

3. Anselm’s motto, “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*), did not express a desire to replace faith with understanding, but saw faith as more volitional than epistemic, something approaching “an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God.” See Thomas Williams and Sandra Visser, *Anselm*, Great Medieval Thinkers (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

throttled by artificial constraints. The fundamental orientation of this project is humility before God, resonating with Paul's perspective:

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power. (1 Cor. 1:26–2:5 NIV11)

For example, considering that in seventy years, plus or minus, we will all be dead, we should pay total attention to any reports of resurrection. If we hear even a *rumor* that someone has been raised from the dead, we should pursue it, track it down, investigate it with all seriousness and rigor until we are truly satisfied with a conclusion.⁴

Resurrections are a mighty tool of ministry, a highly effective church-growth methodology, with inexpressibly massive implications for our faith and practice. After all, what is the final aim of all our spiritual and ministry efforts, if it is not our resurrection from the dead? We echo Paul’s priorities:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:7–11 NIV11)

4. Of course, those who already believe God can and does raise the dead do not need to swim oceans and machete through jungles to find evidence. But to deny God’s power and present activity without serious, passionately desperate investigation is only self-defeating, and tragically so.

Does God really raise people from the dead in our time and age on the earth?⁵ If He can do so, and does, what can He not do? What will He not do? How should we react to this reality? How should our ministry approaches change? Suddenly our focus is wrenched from what *we* can do in ministry to what *God* can do. Theological and ministry research is not secular sociology. Our aim is higher. We strive to learn what *only* God can do. We learn what separates believers from unbelievers. We always ask, “What does God have to do with our methodology?” and, “To what or whom do we attribute effectiveness?” As stated in UTS’s Doctor of Ministry Handbook, “Undergirding all doctoral work is an understanding of God’s action as a framework for our response in a specific ministry focus.”⁶ Without God’s action in our programs, we are left without understanding.

God in action

This D.Min. program is a response to the concern of many churches that seminary-trained ministers must be taught how to do ministry *after* they have come out of seminary. Clearly, theoretical, academic training in theology and ministry does not necessarily constitute the kind of *understanding* we are seeking. Understanding integrates theology with practice, and also God’s agency with human agency. In what sense can we say that we minister the gospel to people in need apart from God’s agency? If the theology seminarians learn in the classroom has no practical effect, it is not good theology, and not systematic enough to meet human need. And conversely, if “practical” ministry can reach its goals without God’s involvement, its goals are too low. We pursue an understanding of living in the power of God, bearing fruit that only comes from being grafted into the vine (John 15).

5. Although we have many accounts of resurrections in the ministries of our churches in Mozambique, we choose not to focus excessively on these in this thesis, other than to refer to several cases in chapter five. Even with the most concrete evidence, there are those who still will not believe. Our primary focus is always on Jesus, who should always receive more attention than the miracles He performs.

6. *The UTS Doctor of Ministry Handbook*, August 2011, 52.

There is a huge danger here, and that is the idea that ministers-in-training can be taught *how* to minister. God's *action* must still be our framework. This is basic to our understanding of the Christian gospel. "Apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5)," Jesus says. And so we pursue an understanding of how God works in us as we work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12–13). And likewise in ministry we imitate Paul: "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (Col. 1:28–29). By this we understand that ministry is God's *power* working in people through His ministers, for "the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Clearly human hearts are not changed by human methodology, but by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. And without change of heart, in what sense can we say that any ministry goal has been achieved? God's power may flow *through* our methods and discipleship programs, but ultimately spiritual fruit cannot be attributed to anything but God's power and agency.

Theology and discipleship

We are pursuing here an understanding of how seminary students are to be trained to do ministry, or actually, how anyone anywhere aspiring to be a minister of the gospel should proceed. And that pursuit must be a subset of our pursuit of the knowledge of God, located in a sufficiently coherent and consistent body of doctrinal understanding. "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16), Paul instructs Timothy—and therefore all ministry students. "Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2 Tim. 2:7 NASB), Paul adds later. Theology matters. Good theology is foundational, essential, inspired and affects all that we do. Everyone has theology, whether true or not. Whatever we think about God becomes our theology. And whatever we think about God directly affects how we feel about Him, and therefore our service for

Him. In our pursuit of “practical, effective” ministry methods, we short-circuit our efforts if we minimize our appreciation of growth in the knowledge of God. Consider the emphasis of Paul’s prayer for his Colossian flock:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. (Col. 1:9–12 NIV11)

We notice in particular here that Paul does not pray firstly for the possible subsequent effects and benefits of the Spirit-filled life, e.g., gifts, miracles, prosperity, success, influence and numerical growth, etc., but for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. These are the overarching goals of his teaching and discipleship training, embedded in the strength of God’s power.

Understanding therefore becomes more than cognitive content and dry assent; it is a full-bodied comprehension with all the saints of the very nature of God, the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of God, a comprehension that is granted by God through the power of the Spirit and realized as Christ dwells in us (Eph. 3:14–18).

We have heard the common refrain in certain renewal circles, “Don’t think; drink!”⁷ And what leader has not heard, “Forget theology; let’s just love Jesus and people, and get on with it!” Scripture such as 1 John does present this utterly simple view of the Christian life, but more comprehensive exposition and even defense are needed when challenges and complications are faced.⁸ How does one love the unlovable? How does

7. This refers to not wanting our thought processes to hinder or block our ability to receive the Holy Spirit with manifestations of His presence. This of course assumes that there are no thought processes that actually *facilitate* receiving more of the Holy Spirit. We are to love God with both our minds and hearts, but that raises the question of whether there are times when we do not “need” to think, but can just “be” and “enjoy.”

8. Gunton points out in his introductory treatment of historical theology that the New Testament writings are occasional rather than systematic in their teaching. Theology as a discipline developed necessarily when the church faced internal challenges (heresy) and external challenges (unbelief) that demanded a response and hard thinking about the content of the gospel. “The rule of faith” sufficed in the early church. Christian beliefs were relatively settled and static in the Middle Ages, marked by

one acquire a love that does not fail (1 Cor. 13)? How does one love the sick and broken without supernatural power? Does love have “teeth?” Is it powerless?⁹ Or are we left with a flaccid liberation theology that empties the cross of much of its power?¹⁰ Questions like these are endless, but highly relevant in Christian ministry, and they can only be answered by good theology. We make the case in this project that forging into the practice of ministry unfortified by good systematic theology is an invitation to discouragement and frustration.

But lest we think of our theology as our own accomplishment and qualification for ministry, we also argue that as we mature in Christ we become ever more mindful of our utter and complete dependence on God, and that we are only beginning to taste the glory of His presence and the powers of the age to come. As we practice ministry, we grow down and not up. Far from considering ourselves “skilled” at ministry, we understand that unless we receive the kingdom of God like a child, we will not enter it at all (Luke 18:17).¹¹ And this understanding itself is a component of good theology. To us the knowledge of God (theology/understanding) is a pleasing and life-giving aroma:

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? (2 Cor. 2:14–16)

formalization, scholasticism in the West, and the development of the idea of relationality in the Trinity in Eastern Orthodoxy. Modern theology has had to retrench in the face of assaults on doctrines that were previously unquestioned, such as the divinity of Christ, His atoning death and God’s interaction with the world. Gunton, “Historical and systematic theology,” 6–10.

9. Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright, *The Love of Power or the Power of Love: A Careful Assessment of the Problems Within the Charismatic and Word-Of-Faith Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: BethanyHouse, 1994). A treatment that basically denies that love has “teeth.” Jesus sympathizes and suffers with us, as we should with those who suffer, but God offers no supernatural power to destroy the works of the devil.

10. Liberation theology tends to see the cross more as a helpless identification with the oppressed rather than an ultimately victorious triumph over evil.

11. Of course this understanding must be coupled with the negative assessment of childhood referred to by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:11: “When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.” But here we speak of childlike faith that is a delight to God. We are to trust God as simply as a young child believes its earthly parents.

Of course it can be argued that the knowledge of God involves *experience* and not just abstract classroom content, and we agree. We cannot separate knowledge from experience. Our experience (or lack of it) informs our knowledge, and therefore theology can never be purely objective and external to us. In Africa we are confronted with the fact that God does indeed raise the dead,¹² and once we admit that, it is not hard to accept the idea that God can and does work in many other miraculous ways as well. And that possibility opens up a whole new realm of theological inquiry and discussion as together we seek God for more understanding—and therefore fruit in ministry.

The point of this project, then, is to make a contribution to the church's overall understanding of God and our Christian life in Him that flows from our actual experience in Africa. Our experience shapes, colors and modifies our previous theological conceptions and interpretations of scripture. For eighteen years in Mozambique we have actually been doing “action research,” and we are still doing it. We have engaged in many types of ministry, and have experimented with many approaches, always searching for the best way to put our theological understanding into practice in our particular context in order to bear the most fruit. In so doing we have had to adjust constantly, always learning, growing and adapting. We have had many failures. We have nothing to gain by being rigid and defensive. We treasure freedom, and are unbound by denominational strictures and the demands and expectations of supporters. We do not fundraise,¹³ and we receive only money that is given unconditionally in the name of the Lord. Our hearts are after God and the truth, and we would rather suffer the loss of all things than turn our ministry into ambition, business or politics.

12. It is difficult to keep track of and confirm all the resurrection testimonies we have heard from the bush, but we will concentrate in particular on a few. We have reports of hundreds of resurrections. In nearly every beginning Bible school class we have new students with no education or training who have already raised the dead. We joke, half seriously, that there is hope: with enough Western theology and discipleship, they too can doubt! We foreigners have so much to learn from simple believers in the bush.

13. We are not legalistic about “forbidding” our staff to fundraise, as faith cannot be legislated, but we are constantly encouraging our missionaries not to treat the Body of Christ as a financial “pie” that must be divided up between ministries, forcing competition for support. Jesus is sufficient.

From desperation to relationship

Perhaps in the end our understanding leads us to echo Paul: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17). Ultimately our only function is to point people to the cross of Jesus Christ, and attribute all initiative, success and accomplishment to Him. To the extent that we point to ourselves and our own methods and abilities, we fail. To the extent that we substitute anything for simple faith in Jesus, we fail. Probably the most important contribution we can make theologically is to establish from our own experience that our perfect Savior Jesus Christ overcomes and triumphs in spite of our weaknesses. Iris Global is not “slick” and “together.” Our materials and methods are not polished and finely tuned, however hard we try. We are always stretched beyond the limits of our understanding and resources. The circumstances we face daily in our extreme, dark, devilish context simply explode any faith in our own plans. Only God knew how to bring revival to Mozambique. We have faced certain death over and over. On countless occasions we have been exhausted by crises for which we had no answers apart from divine intervention. Our libraries of academic books were of no use when facing intense demonic opposition and terrible evil. No book we could pull off the shelf could tell us what to do when we encountered natural disasters, famine, epidemics, cruelty and atrocities beyond description. We have been overwhelmed by injustice, ingratitude, deception, perversion and murderous spirits. But we understand from scripture that these things happen for a reason:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had

received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Cor. 1:3–9)

And so we understand that radical faith and reliance on God come about as He graces us with pressures so great that we can only depend on Him. We in Iris Global are “jars of clay,” proving constantly by our extreme weaknesses that only God can get any credit for the people movement we have witnessed in Mozambique. We identify with Paul:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. (2 Cor. 4:7–11)

We have seen God do the extraordinary in Mozambique, and we want to see Him do all the more. How is His power made perfect? In our weakness: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).¹⁴ Therefore, far from boasting that we in Iris Global have devised effective methods to achieve revival, we move onward and upward by going lower still, taking on Paul’s motive and attitude: “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor. 12:9). We must have His power on us, and that means we must come to Him broken, empty-handed and desperate. He is the answer, and it is impossible for us to humble ourselves too much under His mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6). Our advice to the academic world and to ministry students is: go lower still, absolutely as low as possible. It is the academic process that is under review, not God’s action in ministry. We can never let anything get in the way of our relationship with Him.

In fact, relationship is all that matters in the kingdom of God, and humility is the foundation of our relationship with Him. By poverty of spirit we approach Him, knowing how much we need Him and want Him. Our core values are founded entirely on

14. Paul is referring to his eye condition, but in context he uses that condition as one instance of human weakness in which believers who imitate him should boast.

relationship. We understand everything to be a function of relationship.¹⁵ There is no meaning to ministry methodology apart from relationship. Our understanding comes to rest and into precise focus in relationship. This is the theoretical bedrock of our ministry, and in chapter four we will expand on our understanding of relationship and how our core values derive from it and affect all that we do.

Preliminary foundations

Iris Global does have a statement of faith, given in response to many who question or desire reassurance regarding our evangelical credentials and orthodoxy, rooted in the Bible, which to us is revelation given by grace and our controlling source of theology. Each of these sub-statements, of course, bears far more discussion and qualification, but they are a starting point for those who wish to engage with us theologically:

Statement of Faith

We believe:

The Bible to be the only inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God.¹⁶
 John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

15. The contribution of physics to theology is a rapidly increasing phenomenon occasioning the publication of numerous books that combat atomistic individualism and prior concepts of causality, revealing relationality to be more extensive than scientists, philosophers and theologians have imagined. The empirically verified phenomena of “entanglement” in quantum physics may well be the most descriptive metaphor for human relationality and union with the Trinity that I have encountered. Representative publications are John Polkinghorne, ed., *The Trinity and an Entangled World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), and Brian Clegg, *The God Effect: Quantum Entanglement, Science's Strangest Phenomenon* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006).

16. Our view of inerrancy is more flexible than that of most evangelicals and fundamentalists. We must discuss in what sense the Bible is trustworthy and the word of God. For example, is Paul’s request to Timothy to bring his cloak and scrolls left at Troas the plenary, inerrant, infallible word of God? We do have a synoptic problem, possible pseudopigraphy, not totally consistent lines of manuscript transmission, etc. And we must discuss how our faith in scripture is grounded, the formation of the Canon, the gift of faith, etc.

That there is one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁷

Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10, 11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; John 14:16

In the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁸

John 1:1, 14; 20:28–29; Philippians 2:6–11; Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 2:9

His virgin birth,

Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34–35; Isaiah 7:14

His sinless life,

2 Corinthians 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26–27; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:22

His miracles,

Matthew 4:23; Luke 6:17–19; John 3:2

His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood,¹⁹

Colossians 1:14, 20; Romans 5:8–9; Ephesians 1:7

His bodily resurrection,

1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Luke 24:4–7; 36–48; Revelation 1:17–18

His ascension to the right hand of the Father,

Acts 2:33, 5:30–31; 1 Peter 3:22

and in His personal return in power and in glory.²⁰

Acts 1:11; Philippians 2:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13–18; John 14:1–3

17. Obviously, trinitarian theology can be highly nuanced and remains a broad and dense focus of discussion. I notice in particular that the Trinity is not symmetrical (the Father would not say, “This is my Spirit in whom I am well-pleased,” for example), and that the renewal tends to separate the members as a function of only one highly-differentiated model. Eastern Orthodoxy’s ‘perichoresis’ is a helpful model, revealing a prescience of quantum entanglement.

18. Christology is also a vast subject, not settled in one phrase, and I take a higher view of the man Jesus than most in the renewal. To me kenosis refers to Jesus humbling Himself, not becoming another person by shedding His omniscience and requiring “words of knowledge” to function. He was *Emmanuel* “God with us,” the Alpha and Omega, the great “I am” on earth. The glory of the incarnation was that the disciples walked and talked with, and touched, “that which was from the beginning” (1 John 1:1). Paul emphasizes, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9).

19. Atonement theories abound. We affirm that multiple models are needed, but we take exception to some, such as C. S. Lewis’s attitude that the idea of substitutionary atonement is barbaric, preferring something like “vicarious confession.”

20. This statement requires huge discussion. We do not subscribe to open theology, or the idea that the Book of Revelation is a scenario given to us to prevent. God knows how to glorify Himself and bring His Son back in a final climatic confrontation with Satanic evil at its worst, settling the conflict once and for all time.

That justification by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man.²¹ Romans 3:24–25; John 3:3–7; 1 John 5:11–13; Ephesians 2:1–16; Revelation 5:9; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 6:11

The prime agency for the work of God's Kingdom is the Christian local church functioning under the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the church have been entrusted the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper.²² Acts 2:41–47; 16:4–5; Matthew 16:18; 28:18–20; Ephesians 1:22–23; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

In the present ministry of the Holy Spirit which includes: the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from regeneration; His indwelling, by which the Christian is enabled to live a godly life; His supernatural gifting and empowering of the Church for its work, life and worship.²³ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4; 10:44–46; 1 Corinthians 12, 14

In the return of Jesus Christ, to consummate His Kingdom, in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; those who are saved unto the resurrection of life, and those who are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.²⁴ John 5:28–29; Mark 14:62; 2 Thessalonians 1:2–10; Revelation 1:5–7; 20:4–5; 11–12

In the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.
John 17:11, 21–23; Romans 12:4–5; Ephesians 4:11–16

Further basics from scripture

We “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), and have never tried to emphasize anything that is new, unique, clever or

21. Sanctification has become a troublesome and confusing issue for many in the church today. Is it a process or a finished event? Can the “old man” and the “new man” co-exist in us? See my discussion to follow. This could be the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation and more, and it begs further illumination even after centuries of theologizing. To me it is a process, but it is God's process, and still a gift.

22. Ecclesiology needs discussion in our movement. House churches, “simple church,” cell groups, structure are all controversial subjects not settled by a simple statement of faith. This thesis illustrates what has evolved in Iris Global.

23. Originally a strict oneness Pentecostal, my wife Heidi Baker has expanded her ideas of Spirit baptism. We both affirm, with Randy Clark and many others, that we can be “baptized” by the Spirit in many ways, producing many effects by the power of God that expand a strictly and narrowly defined experience of regeneration. We have been too bound by miserly definitions. But many classic Pentecostals did affirm that “tongues” was a gateway to a whole realm of supernatural empowering, and that “Holy Spirit baptism” was not limited to glossolalia. Speaking in tongues is very important to us.

24. The issues of judgment and eternal punishment are huge in today's church. Exceedingly troublesome are influences like Rob Bell, who scorns Old Testament blood sacrifice as ignorant paganism, and in effect militates against the fear of the Lord. In our experience people who have had visions of both heaven and hell have exceeding love for God and people, and have an unspeakable appreciation for their undeserved salvation. Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011).

different. We try not to be controversial, and share with all Christian streams what no born-again believer can argue with: the glory of the basic gospel, repentance and faith in Jesus, the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ, avoiding anything that would empty the cross of its power, knowing nothing but Christ and Him crucified when backed against a wall, seeking righteousness that comes from faith, transformation through adoption by our heavenly Father, and understanding faith working through love as the only thing that counts (Gal. 5:6), with the hope of attaining to the resurrection from the dead (Phil 3:11).

As we changed course from an itinerant evangelistic ministry to stopping for the poor, we became more and more holistic in our approach to missions.²⁵ We had no choice. When people are thirsty and starving, the holiest thing we can do is offer a cold drink of water and fresh bread. That is what separates sheep from goats. What we have done for the least of these is what we have done for Jesus (Matt. 25:31–46). But we are not just social workers; we have fresh bread that comes down out of heaven, Jesus Himself! And so our ministry is not finished. We go on to “proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

In the process we find that we cannot just be an orphanage, or a church, or a Bible school, or a humanitarian aid organization. We cannot just hold bush conferences, plant farms and engineer micro-investment. We cannot just specialize in education and technical assistance. We as a broadly-based international family must embrace all of the above, and more.... All the while we share with Paul his attitude in Acts 20:24: “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and

25. Evangelism vs. social action is an insistent issue in evangelicalism, exacerbated by liberation theology, aid organizations and the influence of well-known social workers. We are neither merely social workers nor uncaring of present need. As we treat the least of these, we treat Jesus, but our goal is ultimate: “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

Intense biblical inspiration for us came from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We were eager to see the gospel proven in the most challenging circumstances possible. Is it possible to preach the Sermon to the poorest of the poor? Can we tell victims of poverty, disease and war not to worry? Can they be as carefree as flowers of the field and birds of the air? The question was, If this gospel of Jesus does not work in these situations, where does it work? Does the gospel only apply to Western churches, educated pastors and people with jobs, houses, cars, food and clothes? What do theologians and trained pastors have to say to those who suffer the most? We decided that we would rather die than be unable to preach to the hopeless the words of Jesus Himself:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matt. 6:25–33)

Besides the basic evangelical and social aspect of biblical teaching, the total confidence and dependence on the all-sufficiency of our God derived from this sermon has been an unassailable foundation for all that we have done in Iris Global. In our view the worst possible fate for us would be to miss out on what is possible in the Christian life, and reach the end of our ministry careers having experienced only a tiny percentage of what revival can mean. It has been this God-given thirst to "run the race to win"²⁶ and

26. We are repeatedly advised that a life of ministry is not a sprint, but a marathon. But we also treasure the exhilaration and fruit of a sprint—actually many sprints interspersed with times of rest and peace. We are in a war against boredom!

to embrace all that the Bible holds in promise that has driven Iris Global these many years.

Revival History and Theology

What God has accomplished in Mozambique is in continuity with the great and well-known revivals of church history. Our initial faith in the beginning had been built up by our awareness of what had already been proven possible in a stream of previous revival movements. Any ministry dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit as confirmation of the gospel of Jesus Christ should pay as much attention as possible to previous moves of the Spirit, and we have tried to learn and receive encouragement from many.

By “revival” we are not referring to particular church meetings, but to a major restoration of relationship with God in the church, accompanied by mass conversions, intense conviction of sin, major transformation of lives and often many signs and wonders. Not every “move of God” has all these characteristics in significant measure, but in general they mark a period of increased spiritual interest. Each move may emphasize in fresh ways certain aspects of life in God, building on previous moves, but we see them as always being true to the plain gospel, pure and simple.²⁷ Church historians have studied in minute detail a profusion of spiritual resurgences over the centuries, and the literature involved is vast.²⁸ Our purpose here is not to survey all these

27. Admittedly, a highly controversial assertion and concept, but with Paul we will not be led astray from the center, and have this primary concern for our flock: “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3 NASB).

28. The scope of revival research just in America is exemplified by Michael McClymond, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America*, 2 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006). From the publisher’s description: This definitive, two-volume encyclopedia is the first academic reference work devoted specifically to religious revivals in North America. Incorporating the work of 120 scholars, the first volume contains an A-Z set of 228 articles touching on people (e.g., Billy Graham, Aimee Semple McPherson, Francisco Olazabal, etc.), revival events (the Great Awakening, Cane Ridge, the Azusa Street Revival), religious denominations or groups associated with revivals (Methodists, Pentecostals, Primitive Baptists), revival practices (the altar call, bodily manifestations, preaching, praying, speaking in tongues), and themes in revivals (confession of sins, ecstasy, eschatology, foreign missions, material culture, money

revival movements, but to focus attention on certain movements or extended occasions that have had an especially formative spiritual effect on us and our work in Iris Global, and to identify their theological implications.

H. A. Baker

It would be impossible to overstate the power and influence of my spiritual inheritance passed down from my grandfather, H. A. Baker. Here we are not speaking only in general terms of devotion to Christ and missionary service, but of very specific spiritual and theological emphases, intensely battle-tested in spiritual warfare on the field, that have proven to be pillars under the core values of Iris Global. Any discussion of our theoretical foundations, whether biblical, historical or theological, would by all rights have to include a thorough treatment of this inheritance.

H. A. Baker, as my grandfather was always known, chose the furthest reaches of southwest China as his field of service. He was dedicated, persevering for years with little fruit until he nearly gave up. But the Holy Spirit came into his life with power, he continued on in China, and then he saw with his own eyes one of the most wonderful outpourings of the Holy Spirit recorded in all of church history.

To me it seemed natural. If the Bible was true, why shouldn't God confirm His Word through such visions, revelations and spiritual gifts? Why shouldn't we experience the reality of God if we seek Him according to scripture? Why shouldn't the supernatural things of God become increasingly normal as we draw closer to Him?

I heard more of these things on every occasion I spent time with my grandfather. I first remember him in Hong Kong, after we had all been forced to leave China soon after the revolution of 1949. I would sit on his lap, and he would pour his memories into me—

and revivals). The second volume includes a documentary history of religious revivals from 1527 to 2005, with editorial introductions and selected passages from 121 primary texts—some published here for the first time—and a general bibliography of about 5000 books, articles, and dissertations.

new stories every time—of angels and demons, miracles, power encounters, infillings of the Holy Spirit, winning the lost, serving the King. What a normal way to live!

Later we, and many other China missionary families, moved to Taiwan. Of course my grandfather gravitated there to a minority group, learning a new and difficult dialect of Chinese, and continuing his long pattern of reaching lost sheep wherever they could be found. He and my grandmother lived simply, as the Chinese did. He did not appeal for support. He gave away what he did not need. He earned the love and respect of missionaries all over Taiwan, even those whose methods were very different from his. And I could never forget his witness, even for a moment.

My grandfather's ministry represented a blend of Word and Spirit that has carried my faith all these years. He never let miracles and manifestations divert him from the teachings of the Bible, nor did his faithfulness to the Word become a hesitancy to drink in the realities of all that is testified to in that Word. He was careful. He searched the scriptures to verify what he heard and saw, and he found the living God in those scriptures. He made sense to me; he shaped my life.

He also intimidated me. For a long time I never thought I could carry on a ministry like his in any way. It was wonderful, but such work was for unusual saints, not ordinary people like me. But over the years my memories of his book *Visions Beyond the Veil*²⁹ continued to fuel the hunger for revival in my heart until I could no longer be "ordinary." Living in revival, around the throne of Jesus, thrilled with Him and anything that has to do with Him, has become the only appealing way of life to me.

Now my wife Heidi and I are in Africa, working among the poorest people we can find, taking in orphaned and abandoned children and looking for lost sheep everywhere we can. And Jesus is again revealing Himself to "the least of these," just as he did in Kunming, China, so many years ago in my grandfather's orphanage. That outpouring was not in vain; it was not just for the benefit of a few isolated people in a faraway country.

29. Baker, *Visions*.

Its story has fired hearts among the spiritually hungry around the world for two, and now three generations, and it is being continued today in those who will be like children in His sight.

My grandfather saw among his beggar orphans how the Holy Spirit could graciously bring the delights of heaven into even the most miserable hearts. He saw the heart of Jesus, who can and does wipe away every tear from the eyes of those He rescues from the hand of Satan. And if He can transform illiterate, wretched and forgotten orphans in remote China into monuments of His grace, and pillars of His church, then He can redeem us in every way too. He is good, and we will love Him forever!

One of our primary aims in coming to Mozambique was to see a continuation of *Visions Beyond the Veil*, and our “procedure” was to concentrate on “the least of these,” as H. A. Baker and his wife had done. We were looking for the most likely place to find revival, and we learned from his life and ministry that the most likely place to find it is actually in the most unlikely places. Truly God chooses “the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are” (1 Cor. 1:28). His love is such that our treatment of the poor and lowly becomes our treatment of Him (Matt. 25:31–46). Though we appreciate ministries to the powerful and influential, our approach has always been to begin at the very bottom of the mountain rather than the top.³⁰ It is an approach we have seen God honor beyond our dreams with a “trickle up” outpouring of revelation and revival that eclipses “trickle down” theories of ministry.

30. This raises the issue of dominion theology, with the “Seven Mountain Mandate” turning viral in recent years in renewal streams. Dominionists argue that traditional church ministry fails to reach the larger culture, and Christians must take dominion over the earth again as Adam did, particularly in the areas of business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion. But that can send the wrong signal to outsiders, unfortunately sounding almost like Christian sharia law to some. We prefer to go lower still, and allow God to exalt us in our lowness as He desires, as was Joseph’s experience in Egypt. Jesus’ Kingdom was not of this world. For a recent treatment of the Seven Mountain perspective for a popular audience, see Michael Maiden, *Turn the World Upside Down: Discipling the Nations with the Seven Mountain Strategy* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2011).

H. A. Baker's influence and contributions did not end with *Visions Beyond the Veil*, but they were just beginning. He wrote at least eight more books,³¹ usually in the roughest conditions imaginable while itinerating on foot over the mountains of Yunnan Province in southwest China. The initial outpouring in Kunming became a spark and catalyst for much more revival later, mostly among remote minority tribes in the mountains south of the provincial capital. *God in Ka Do Land* is the remarkable story of the Holy Spirit's miraculous work in this area, with detailed stories of power encounters, demons and angels, miracles, healings, visions and visitations, and church growth that grew to include many thousands of people spread from mountain valley to mountain valley over a vast area. Thousands were baptized in cold mountain rivers, rising to speak in tongues and experiencing many manifestations of the Spirit's presence without any prior teaching, exposure or conditioning regarding such power.

Because of his many spiritual experiences with God, H. A. Baker had a fervent interest in all things to do with the invisible spiritual world. Many of his books dealt with resurrection testimonies, visions of both heaven and hell, angels and demons, visions of future tribulation, and continuing revival in China. He was a rugged individualist, forging ahead without any denominational support or method of fundraising. But his newsletters and books made him widely known among an earlier generation of Pentecostal

31. H. A. Baker's books were not published, promoted and distributed as is common today. He deliberately did not copyright them, and was willing for them to be spread freely. Although almost impossible to find today, they had a strong, if hidden influence on an older generation of Pentecostal pioneers. We are working on e-Pub versions without cost. Bibliographic information is sketchy, but here are many of his titles, with available details:

H. A. Baker, *God in Ka Do Land*. Available as PDF file at <http://www.irisglobal.org/pdf/God-in-Ka-Do-Land.pdf>.

H. A. Baker, *Heaven and the Angels* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: New Wine Press, 2009).

H. A. Baker, *Plains of Glory and Gloom* (Minneapolis, MN: The Osterhus Publishing House, 1950s).

H. A. Baker, *The Three Worlds* (Minneapolis, MN: The Osterhus Publishing House, 1950s).

H. A. Baker, *They Saw Hell* (Minneapolis, MN: The Osterhus Publishing House, 1950s).

H. A. Baker, *Through Tribulation to Glory* (Minneapolis, MN: Calvary Books and Tracts, 1960s).

H. A. Baker, *Under His Wings*, original publisher unknown, available online at <http://www.irisglobal.org/pdf/Under-His-Wings.pdf>, Iris 2008 edition.

H. A. Baker, *Visions Beyond the Veil* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1973).

revivalists. I grew up on his lap, hearing never-ending streams of stories of God's power and action in a pagan, idolatrous and demonic environment.

He had great weaknesses as well, and like Paul he would boast in them. Not a natural or dynamic speaker, and with a very poor accent in Chinese, he used to call himself "the worst preacher in China." But his dedication overwhelmed his hearers, and the integrity of his Christian understanding has ever been our encouragement.

H. A. Baker wrote an extremely instructive autobiography, *Under His Wings*,³² one that we recommend to all our Iris staff, or anyone preparing for the missionary life. To provide richer insight into the gravity and influence of H. A.'s life on our ministry, we offer several writings by my son, Elisha Baker, and myself that portray with more artistry and feeling the spiritual lineage that has so shaped our style, core values and "methodology" in Iris. Appendix A contains a descriptive narrative of my visit in November 2001 back to "Ka Do Land" in Yunnan Province, southwest China, to visit the mountain valley H. A. Baker called home for fifteen years. Appendix B contains my son's introduction to *Under His Wings*, and also the first chapter of a book in progress in which Elisha reveals the perspective of his heart toward the "Baker" lineage of which he is a part. His is a valuable contribution, I believe, to the discussion of "training," "discipleship" and "raising up a new generation."

The persecuted church in China

Since I was born in China and raised in Asia, I have been profoundly aware of and influenced by the sufferings and victories of Christians in China. In Iris Global we do have a theology of suffering that informs us in all our trials in Africa. Suffering for the gospel, and for the sake of righteousness is not only necessary and purging, but it is an

32. Baker, *Under His Wings*.

honor, privilege and joy to be counted worthy of suffering for His name.³³ These Chinese believers under persecution have everything to teach the West, and Western academics. Chinese Christians have demonstrated countless times over in the most astounding ways just how much love it is possible for a human being to have for God when filled with the Holy Spirit. A powerful, positive, victorious theology of suffering has been necessary all through our experience in Africa. Godly suffering means learning to love when faced with evil opposition. “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom. 8:17).

A profoundly formational book for us was *Lilies Amongst the Thorns*,³⁴ edited by Dennis Balcombe, a missionary who has poured his life into the church in China, and whom we know very well.³⁵ This book is a compendium of intense testimonies of persecution for Christ, so overwhelming that I could only read it a few pages at a time, pausing for hours and days at a time just to weep and wonder at the reality of what was read. We live for the next life, not this one, and we must choose. To gain our life, we must lose it. Our aim is not wealth on earth, but treasure in heaven. Jesus is worth the loss of all things. From these Chinese saints we have learned unforgettable gems, such as “Prayer is like breathing; if you stop, you die!” and “Joy is the energy of the Holy Spirit!”

My sister, Linda Kaahanui, wrote a beautifully creative book, *Every Good Gift*,³⁶ portraying in incredibly vivid descriptive prose the experiences of believers in China

33. I watched an underground church weeping as they listened to their pastor telling of his sufferings in prison. I later learned they were weeping because they had not yet been counted worthy of suffering as he did.

34. Danyun, *Lilies Amongst Thorns*, trans. Dennis Balcombe (Tonbridge, Kent, UK: Sovereign World, 1991).

35. Founder of Revival China Ministries International, based in Hong Kong, which has been a major force for the gospel across China. Once pursued and ousted as persona non grata by Chinese authorities, he is now highly influential and recognized as a lover and friend of China by its government.

36. Linda Baker Kaahanui, *Every Good Gift: Sufficient Grace in Time of Need* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1988).

whose love for God exceeded every device of the enemy aimed at the tortuous destruction of that love. Such stories taken from the triumphant history of the church have been a constant bulwark for us in Africa.

A well-known book that has had a fiery impact on the faith of readers around the world is *The Heavenly Man*, by “Brother Yun” with Paul Hattaway.³⁷ Brother Yun’s story is not only one of suffering and astounding miracles in China, but also one focused on the character and beauty of Jesus. Paul Hattaway is a dedicated, thorough and prolific scholar of persecution and martyrdom in China, and has compiled reference volumes that present overwhelming evidence of God’s presence and power in the hearts of His people who did not value their own lives in the service of the gospel.³⁸ The sufferings and victories that the people of God have accomplished in China comprise a major foundation for the core values of Iris Global.

The Jesus Movement

Describing the foundational and historical influences on Iris Global would be far from complete without acknowledging the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps three to four million young people from “the hippie generation” in the West were brought to faith in Jesus Christ after “turning on, tuning in and dropping out” of status quo society. I found myself in the midst of the movement at one of its founding hotspots, Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, California.³⁹ After four years of academic concentration in biblical studies in college, and steeped in traditional worship using hymnbooks and organ music, going to church to learn from long-haired, barefoot hippies

37. Brother Yun with Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man* (Grand Rapids, MI, and London, UK: Monarch Books, 2002).

38. The first of this series of highly researched volumes by Hattaway detailing martyrdom in China is Paul Hattaway, *China’s Christian Martyrs* (Toronto, Canada: Monarch Books, 2007).

39. For several years I sat under the Bible teaching of Chuck Smith, and the weekly meetings of Lonnie Frisbee; one was famous for his teaching, the other for the power of the Holy Spirit. Eventually they split, tearing the revival apart and confusing many.

was at first out of the question. What could they know of theology, and what did they have that I did not have? But what I found was love, a place love-starved youth came just to cry, hug and be hugged in the love of Jesus. Soon it was the only place to be every night of the week. One had to arrive two hours early to get a seat. Meetings went to midnight, and then there were “afterglows.” One thousand five hundred people were baptized a month in the ocean nearby, making national news. No one thought of taking dates to movies or anywhere else; church was the most exciting place on the planet! Word and Spirit were blended in those days. We were naively unaware of the issues that plagued the movement later that divided emphasis on Bible study and on experiencing gifts of the Spirit. Contemporary Christian music was born, opening up a whole new world of worship that appealed to a new generation, and that was creatively filled with emotion. The miraculous was considered normal. Community living and non-materialism were attractive. A significant part of an entire generation was saved.

Many theological issues cropped up later that complicated and damaged the movement, but its focus on the real love of God instead of rebellious, drug-induced “hippie love” or any other kind of love became a previously unrealized priority. Study of the Bible became a love affair. Interest in Israel and end-time events came to the fore.⁴⁰ We lived in a richer spiritual world than we had ever experienced before, one that we had not expected to find in America.

The Indonesian Revival

Miracles occurred in the Jesus Movement, and the presence of God was obvious, but I was not prepared for the stunning reports of revival that began to pour out of Indonesia during this same time period. At first I was resistant again, still retaining a certain measure of a critical spirit. Now the problem was to receive not only from

40. Chuck Smith’s emphasis on a pre-tribulation rapture and frequent trips to the Holy Land made end-time events a regular part of our spiritual diet, but I shared my grandfather’s perspective that the rapture was not imminent; we had not yet seen God’s greatest effort at pouring out His Spirit on all flesh.

hippies, but from jungle natives far off in the South Pacific! But resistance was futile. Eventually I read Mel Tari's *Like a Mighty Wind*,⁴¹ absolutely impressed and excited with the fact the God was doing all the types of miracles that were recorded in the New Testament. From walking on water to changing water into wine, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!

That book, however, was not the greatest contribution to our core values. It was Tari's second book, *The Gentle Breeze of Jesus*,⁴² that radically catapulted my expectations of what a highly intimate, spiritually romantic relationship with Jesus could be like. Ministry was not just about preaching the gospel and healing the sick, but about nearness to God, feeling loved by Him and delighting in Him to an extent never dreamed of before. The idea of revival took on a whole new dimension, and a thirst to be always in that heart-filling secret place deep in the heart of Jesus was born that helped to make the birth of Iris Global possible.

I and my wife Heidi Baker began our missionary lives with a trip to Indonesia with Mel Tari, finally settling in Bali, and for the first few years of our ministry together we remained deeply involved in Indonesia. In that environment of high expectancy in the Lord, and also heavy encounters with the demonic world, we became increasingly prepared for our ultimate future challenge: Africa!

The Toronto Blessing

There is one more major, foundational source from revival history that has added radical power to our movement, and that was the massive impartation we received from the Holy Spirit in the context of the "Toronto Blessing," one of the most controversial moves of God in all of history to date. It was not so controversial to us, actually. H. A. Baker, his children in Kunming and his many converts in mountain tribal country had

41. Mel Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 1971).

42. Mel Tari, *The Gentle Breeze of Jesus* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 1977).

experienced all manner of manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The same was true of many believers in other parts of China. When my wife, Heidi Baker, was filled with the Spirit, she was filled with joy and laughter for days, speaking in tongues, rolling on the ground and clearly overpowered by God. When we first visited Toronto in 1995–1996, we had already seen such phenomena and had no misgivings about their origin. We had long experience with demonic powers in Asia, and had never known them to bestow pure love, peace and joy on anyone; rather, they bred fear, hostility and darkness. Demonic power was always used to control people through intimidation and curses. Nothing of the sort was in evidence at Toronto.

Instead, I was overwhelmed by the sheer, spectacular, extravagant greatness of the gospel, the glory of the cross, the absolute, penetrating, irresistible, cutting-edge truth of all that we had been taught about God all our lives. The Spirit of God seemed like a divine Niagara Falls, a brilliantly refreshing, clean, white power that cut through the hard rock of our sin and fallen world, replacing everything with absolutely pure delight. It also brought intense conviction, an agonized realization of all that we had been missing for so long. Jesus was far greater than we thought! I sobbed for days, and also was indescribably thrilled to overflowing with God and the whole, entire realm of reality in Him. We experienced a whole new realm of freedom in the Spirit that has only expanded in all the years following.

The manifestations of the Spirit at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship attracted intense interest—and criticism—but here we concentrate on the fruit of that move and how it affected us in Iris Global. In 2000 *Charisma Magazine* published an article on us that succinctly described what happened in short order after our time in that spiritually charged atmosphere in Toronto:

The Bakers' ministry—Iris Ministries—today operates 200 churches across Mozambique. Most astounding is the fact that 197 of those churches were born in just 1-1/2 years. The Bakers know that God has given them the growth—since their hardest efforts at ministry had produced only three churches in the previous

17 years. For Heidi, the exponential growth represents the fulfillment of a promise God made to her at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF) in 1997.

“I was completely cooked, slammed and smushed—all of the things that look weird,” Heidi told *Charisma*. “I felt powerful electricity all over my body. I could hardly stand the heat. I’m hearing God say, ‘Hundreds of churches,’ and I’m laughing hysterically. It’s the funniest thing I ever heard. It took us seventeen years to plant three churches, and two of them weren’t doing that well.”

Today the Bakers’ children’s center near the capital city of Maputo is responsible for the daily care of more than six hundred children—and they take in more children almost every day. Iris Ministries also has started a Bible school for national pastors and older teenagers now preparing for the ministry.

Says Heidi, “Pastor Rego, who recently finished our school of ministry, just raised a lady from the dead in Jesus’ name. He prayed three days over her corpse without eating or drinking water. That’s tenacity! The whole village got saved.”

“The dead have been raised,” Rolland told *Charisma*, “Blind eyes have seen, a paralyzed pastor healed, a dumb boy is speaking, epileptics and demoniacs have been restored.”⁴³

In a few years two hundred churches became two thousand churches, and growth kept coming. In early 2012 Iris made another careful count that came to 10,517 churches.⁴⁴ And healings have continued all these years.

But we received impartation for far more than church growth. Jesus unforgettably conveyed to us our utter dependence on Him and the Body of Christ. As Heidi discovered during an early visit to Toronto, if we look into His eyes, we will always have enough to do what He has given us to do:

Often during my time at TACF I was on the floor before the Lord unable to move. His presence was so heavy upon me. One night at the end of a meeting I was still unable to move. I was rather hidden behind the altar and began to get slightly nervous as Betty the security guard was calling, “OK, everyone! It’s time to go!” The Lord spoke to my heart and said, “I am sending a precious servant to rescue you.” I couldn’t even move my little finger. Betty came over and gently asked me how I was doing. She got a couple of people to help lift me into a chair. The love and mercy that flowed out of her was life-transforming. The Lord taught me so much during those times of utter weakness. His presence was so strong upon me that I felt as if a blanket of liquid love was laid upon me. He demonstrated that He is my only strength. He is my hope. I depend only on Him. I can do nothing without Him, and nothing without the Body of Christ.

One night I was groaning in intercession for the children of Mozambique. There were thousands coming toward me and I was crying, “No, Lord, there are too many!” Then I had a dramatic, clear vision of Jesus. I was with Him, and thousands and thousands of children surrounded us. I saw His shining face and

43. C. Hope Flinchbaugh, “Floods of Love in Mozambique,” *Charisma Magazine*, May 31, 2000. Now stored online, <http://www.charismamag.com/spirit/evangelism-missions/21-floods-of-love-in-mozambique> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012), 72–86.

44. Accurate counts in the bush are extremely difficult, and numbers are always fluctuating as churches are planted or fall away.

His intense, burning eyes of love. I also saw His body. It was bruised and broken, and His side was pierced. He said, “Look into my eyes. You give them something to eat.” Then He took a piece of His broken body and handed it to me. It became bread in my hands, and I began to give it to the children. It multiplied in my hands. Then again the Lord said, “Look into my eyes. You give them something to drink.” He gave me a cup of blood and water, which flowed from His side. I knew it was a cup of bitterness and joy. I drank it and then began to give it to the children to drink. The cup did not go dry. By this point I was crying uncontrollably. I was completely undone by His fiery eyes of love. I realized what it had cost Him to provide such spiritual and physical food for us all. The Lord spoke to my heart and said, “There will always be enough, because I died.”⁴⁵

Hundreds of books and countless articles have been written about the “Toronto Blessing,”⁴⁶ and it is not the purpose of our writing here to continue the discussion of its validity and theological veracity. Theological engagement was not a feature of our experience there at the time. The Word of God and the gospel of Jesus became a healing, exhilarating river,⁴⁷ liquid love, bolts of electric power, joy inexpressible and full of glory,⁴⁸ the personalized force that enabled us to continue against all odds in Mozambique. Jesus became our endurance, our motivation, our methodology, our sustenance. Yes, we had seen such power from the Holy Spirit before, but never on so many gathered together, never with such effect and fruit.

We could not get enough. Day after day and week after week we soaked, absorbed and received all we could night and day, often to 3 a.m. in the morning. We were so thirsty, and had seemingly unlimited appetites.

Research has been done on the Toronto Blessing. Probably most well-known is the extensive paper written by Margaret Poloma at the University of Akron: “By Their

45. Our first book’s title, *There Is Always Enough*, was the result.

46. The most significant book at the time for Heidi and me, and which associated the Toronto manifestations with the outpouring witnessed by Jonathan Edwards in New England, provided theological input from Edwards’s reflections on “religious affections,” etc.: Guy Chevreau, *Catch the Fire: The Toronto Blessing* (Toronto, Canada: HarperCollins, 1994).

47. The spiritual movement associated with Toronto is often termed “the river” as a reference to the river imagery in Ezekiel in which the river brings life wherever it flows (Ezekiel 47:9).

48. 1 Peter 1:8 realized!

Fruits...: A Sociological Assessment of the ‘Toronto Blessing.’”⁴⁹ In her prologue she writes:

Using a scientific perspective does not permit the researcher to expound on the basis of personal opinion, philosophical presuppositions, or theological beliefs. Although sociology can provide an objective analysis of certain facets of the Toronto Blessing, it clearly lacks the sensitivity to deal with the deep mysteries of the Holy Spirit. What sociology can do is to contribute to the assessment of the effects or “fruit” of a social phenomenon, including what has been happening to those who visit the Toronto Airport Church. Although its canons warn practitioners against proclaiming what is “good” and what is “bad,” the sociological method can be used to measure the impact of the Toronto Blessing on individuals and on groups.⁵⁰

And in her summary and conclusion, Poloma reaches an understanding that very much forms a biblical, historical and theological foundation for the core values of Iris:

As may be seen from both the quantitative (survey results) and qualitative (anecdotal testimonies) data collected from over 850 visitors to the Toronto Airport Church, there is substantial evidence that the Toronto Blessing has had a decided impact on the lives of the majority of those who responded to the survey. I would like to summarize some of what I regard as the major findings reported here before presenting a conclusion as a Christian sociologist.

The data I have presented tell us a good deal about the spirituality of the pilgrims to the Toronto Airport Church. Most seem to have come as seekers—sometimes reluctant and skeptical, but still as seeking more of God. In their quest they found the words of Jeremiah 29:13 to be true: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart.” The overwhelming majority felt they had experienced an unusual touch of God that has lasted beyond the spirited time at the Toronto renewal site. Most of the visitors were already committed Christians. Although there are many reported first-time conversions and recommitments, the Renewal seems to be more about an equipping and empowering of already committed believers than making new converts. Through deep experiences of God’s love, people claim to be healed of emotional wounds and are now capable of reaching out to family and friends.

(...)

As a sociologist looking at these overall findings, I see benefits of the Toronto Blessing that go beyond the ones that are easily measured by surveys and interviews. The “fruit” has implications for the very survival of Christianity in the western world. Religious beliefs and practices were once at the center of societies, providing a kind of “sacred canopy” against the calamities of life. In modern times, however, religion has been seemingly rendered powerless by rational thought and the rapid growth of science and technology. For many people the “sacred canopy” is pierced with holes. Harvard University theologian Harvey Cox

49. Margaret Poloma, “By Their Fruits...: A Sociological Assessment of the ‘Toronto Blessing.’” (paper, Dept. of Sociology, The University of Akron; Akron, OH, 1995), available online, <http://www.evanwiggs.com/revival/manifest/socfruit.html> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012).

50. In this project, however, our purpose is in fact to pursue theological inquiry and development as well in order to arrive at core values.

writes the following about the “traumatic cultural changes” in the modern world and religion’s response to them in his recent book *Fire from Heaven*:

These traumatic cultural changes created a radically new religious situation. Most churches fumbled their efforts to respond to it. Conservatives dug in and insisted that dogmas were immutable and hierarchies indispensable. Liberals tried to adjust to the times but ended up absorbing so much of the culture of technical rationality that they no longer had any spiritual appeal. But the pentecostals, almost by accident it sometimes seems, found a third way. They rebelled against creeds but retained the mystery. They abolished hierarchies but kept ecstasy. They rejected both scientism and traditionalism. They returned to the raw inner core of human spirituality and thus provided just the new kind of “religious space” many people needed.⁵¹

In other words, modern thought has tended to disparage and to deny religious reality, and those who believe must find ways maintain their religious beliefs in a highly skeptical world. One way is the way of the fundamentalists (whether Islamic, Christian or any other traditional religion) where religious reality is simply affirmed as being true. (“The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it,” reads the bumper sticker reflecting Christian literalism.) Another approach taken by many mainline church leaders is to “demythologize” the scriptures. (“The Bible is a book of stories; miracles, including Jesus’s resurrection, are to be understood symbolically,” say these liberal theologians.) There is a third alternative to the two diametrically opposed intellectual routes—a path that some social scientists say is the only truly viable one in the long run. This is the path of religious experience. Religious experience is the “third way” noted by Cox in the above quotation—and it is the path of the Toronto Blessing. The experiential spirituality reflected in this study is one that is balanced: a healthy sense of personal sin in the face of God’s holiness, a willingness to forgive and to be forgiven, and an ability to accept God’s love and the love of others. It is a spirituality that is postmodern in that it reflects the wholeness of the human being—an integration of the human spirit, soul (mind and emotions) and body.

The Toronto Blessing, however, is not just about any spiritual experience. It is not about the physical manifestations that fixate the attention of many newcomers, nor is it primarily about extraordinary spiritual gifts. The Renewal is about satisfying the desire of the human heart. It is about human beings encountering a God of love whose love empowers them to share what they have been given. It is that love—love as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13—which has the power to transform lives, families, churches and societies.⁵²

Polama recognizes with us that we are after more than “the raw inner core of human spirituality” and the new “religious space” that Cox identifies; we are

51. Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995).

52. In ensuing years much discussion has arisen as a result of reflection concerning what exactly the Toronto Blessing was about. The truth of the gospel, the joy of the Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit, the Father heart of God, soaking in His presence—and much else—have been advanced as the heart of the movement. There is much to embrace.

unapologetically after the reality of God's presence,⁵³ and are experiencing it in increasing measure.⁵⁴

A Doctor of Ministry dissertation was written by Don Kantel at Regent University in 2007 that links the “Toronto Blessing” to Iris Global in Africa.⁵⁵ In his statement of the ministry issues involved, Kantel writes:

The thesis of this study—that the Toronto Blessing Revival was an authentic move of the Spirit of God...one which continues to exercise a renewing and empowering effect on ministry and mission around the world, especially as evidenced by Iris Ministries in Mozambique—requires that important questions of strategic concern to contemporary ministry and mission be addressed and answered:

- 1) Was the Toronto Blessing Renewal an authentic move of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) What has been its impact on and implications for ministry in the Western Church?
- 3) And more importantly for present purposes, since the eventual scope of the Toronto Blessing was global, what have been its impact on and implications for world missions, as illustrated by the case of Iris Ministries in Mozambique?⁵⁶

Kantel proceeds then to review “testimony from three distinct sources competent to speak with reliable authority”:

The first voice is that of Scripture itself. Gifts of the Spirit and somatic manifestations associated with the Renewal are examined in their biblical context. The second is that of church history. I refer to documented revivals, noting consistencies and comparing them with the Toronto experience. And the third is contemporary testimony and evidence of the results of participating in the Toronto Renewal. Attention is also paid to representative critics of the movement and their arguments, and these are weighed against the evidence.⁵⁷

53. The desperation of Moses in crying out to God, “If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here” (Ex. 33:15), is frequently the subject of teaching in the renewal.

54. At the time we had no concept of just how much more we were to experience of “the river” in Mozambique and around the world.

55. Donald Kantel, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ Revival and its Continuing Impact on Mission in Mozambique” (D.Min. dissertation, Regent University, 2007).

56. Derived from Kantel, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ Revival,” 5–6, in *Downstream from Toronto: The ‘Toronto Blessing’ Revival and Iris Ministries in Mozambique*, a lightly edited, more readable version of his dissertation for publication, not yet published.

57. Derived from Kantel, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ Revival,” Abstract, v, in *Downstream*. Kantel’s extensive research is a valuable, concentrated resource for those looking for a comprehensive treatment of the issues raised by critics.

Kantel's review is thorough, and for that reason this project will not repeat the work he has done. But certainly his research and conclusions are a great encouragement to us in Iris Global, and form yet another strong segment of our underlying foundations. His following direction and final perspective is also provided:

The focus then moves to the dramatic and inspiring story of Iris Ministries in Mozambique, Africa and establishes clearly the continuing impact of the Toronto Renewal on the work of Iris founders Heidi and Rolland Baker. This study concludes—notwithstanding the much-publicized controversy and criticism evoked by what came to be known simply as “Toronto”—that Scripture, church history, personal testimony, and the direct fruit of the movement all authenticate the Toronto Blessing as a genuine move of the Holy Spirit. And the work of Iris Ministries in Mozambique is presented as the leading “output” of the Toronto Blessing Renewal in the twenty-first century.⁵⁸

Then in his concluding chapter he again makes clear his conviction that the outpouring of the Spirit at Toronto has been the powerful engine of the people movement in Mozambique that we still seeing:

It is clear that in the providence and purposes of God, Rolland and Heidi Baker and the work of Iris Ministries in Africa have continually been renewed, empowered, and expanded by their contact with the Toronto Blessing over the past fifteen years. Apart from Toronto, the Iris story might have ended in ignominy in 1996. The Toronto Blessing Renewal has been the source of the river of God which is enabling Iris Ministries to bring powerful revival to Mozambique and surrounding regions.

And it is equally clear that under Iris and in the African crucible, the revival fires may now be burning even hotter than they did in Toronto itself. With over 7,000 new churches planted in just over ten years, and likely between one and two million new believers, the statistical fruit from Iris has far outstripped its parent movement. There were certainly many wonderful healings directly attributed to the Renewal in Toronto, but as the incidence of healing miracles in Toronto itself has decreased, it has accelerated at Iris—with powerful miracles like healing of blindness, deafness, and lameness and raising the dead being experienced with awesome frequency. And while Toronto has not succeeded in making much obvious impact on the city of Toronto or secular society in general, Iris Ministries is significantly impacting a country and a region. Iris Ministries today is a reflection in an African context of the highest ministry values and Kingdom principles of the Toronto Blessing Revival. And, at the present time, Iris appears

58. Kantel, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ Revival,” Abstract, v–vi. At the time Heidi and I were just two more people out of hundreds of thousands at the Toronto church, and we felt we were amazingly blessed to be included at all. The fruit in Mozambique is entirely God’s doing, and a complete and utter surprise to us.

to be fueled by a higher-octane anointing of the Holy Spirit for power evangelism that is bringing a nation into God's Kingdom.⁵⁹

We have experienced some measure of God's love, power and presence all through our lives and ministry, but we concur that through the "Toronto Blessing" we received an additional, massive impetus from Him that enabled us not only to survive and maintain, but to bear fruit increasingly in exponential measure.

The mystics of church history until today

Mysticism is defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary as "belief that union with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender."⁶⁰ The word comes from the Greek μυστικός (originally, an 'initiate' of a mystery religion). In the Christian world the word creates the impression in the minds of many believers that the experience of and communion with God is a rare, strange, unfamiliar and largely unattainable province of a few exalted saints in history, not to be expected or sought in the lives of ordinary believers. And because of strong institutional structures that enforce hierarchies, creeds and defined worship procedures, independent mystical experience is usually deprecated in much of the church. Authority and control, advanced initially to shepherd the church, can and often does become a barrier to personal and direct experience of our Lord.

Various church traditions have differing understandings and expectations of experience with God and the nature of our relationship with Him. But we in the leadership of Iris Global are indebted especially to a number of people, past and present, whose lives and testimonies have encouraged us to "seek His face" all the more, and to

59. Kantel, "The 'Toronto Blessing' Revival," 169. We point to a set of core values that spring from a broader base than the Toronto Blessing, but without the impartation we received there, we realize we could not have continued our ministry at all, much less see such growth.

60. New Oxford American Dictionary, included in the Apple operating system Mac OS X 10.7.4.

aspire to a level of holiness in Him far beyond previous realizations. We make mention here of several saints who have had a marked influence on Iris and its foundations.

Marguerite Porete

Marguerite Porete was the fourteenth century author of *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,⁶¹ a recently discovered vibrant work of great literary force that was the antithesis of the scholastic articulation that marked her age in church history. She used vivid imagery and the powerful device of direct discourse with personifications of “Love,” “Reason” and “the Soul” to build an allegory representing the nature of the soul’s relationship with God. Her work is impressive as literature, but it is her daring, searching exposition of mystical theology that has made a deep impression on me, reinforcing many of my deepest convictions. She begins:

You who would read this book,
 If you indeed wish to grasp it,
 Think about what you say,
 For it is very difficult to comprehend;
 Humility, who is keeper of the treasury of
 Knowledge
 And the mother of the other Virtues,
 Must overtake you.

Theologians and other clerks,
 You will not have the intellect for it,
 No matter how brilliant your abilities,
 If you do not proceed humbly.
 And may Love and Faith, together,
 Cause you to rise above Reason,
 [Since] they are the ladies of the house.

Even Reason witnesses
 In the Thirteenth Chapter of this book,
 And with no shame about it,
 That Love and Faith make her live
 And she does not free herself from them,
 For they have lordship over her,
 Which is why she must humble herself.

Humble, then, your wisdom

61. Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Ellen L. Babinsky (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1993).

Which is based on Reason,
 And place all your fidelity
 In those things which are given
 By Love, illuminated through Faith.
 And thus you will understand this book.⁶²

Her writing is richly and exhilaratingly dense, offering an exquisite, rarified panorama of spirituality spanning 139 short “chapters.” It is the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago, and invites much further study of Porete’s perspective on the spiritual life. It would be a joy to offer lengthy discussion and reaction to her myriad contributions, but in this context we will simply include here a sample chapter, “How this Soul is unencumbered in her four aspects”:

The first aspect in which this Soul is unencumbered is that she has no reproach in her at all...How could it be that Love could be able to have her practice along with the works of the Virtues, when it is necessary that works cease when Love has her practice?

The second aspect is that she has no longer any will, no more than the dead in the sepulchers have, but only the divine will. Such a Soul is not concerned about either justice or mercy. She places and plants everything in the will alone of the One who loves her.

The third aspect is that she believes and maintains that there never was, nor is there, nor will there ever be anything worse than she, nor any better loved by the One who loves her according to what she is. Note this and do not grasp it poorly.

The fourth aspect is that she believes and maintains that it is no more possible for God to be able to will something other than goodness than it is for her to will something other than His divine will. Love has so adorned the Soul with Herself that She makes her maintain this about Him, who by His goodness has transformed her into such goodness through His goodness; who, by His Love, has transformed her into such love through love; and [who], by His will, has purely transformed her into such will through divine will. He is of Himself in her for her sake this same One. And this she believes and maintains. She would not be unencumbered in all her aspects by any other means.⁶³

These four concepts are priceless in the ministry of Iris. Ministry is not work in the practice of love; our job is not to change the will of God, but to share a common will in union; no one is worse or more loved by God than we are; and perfection in Him is such that He cannot will other than our greatest good, and we cannot will other than His

62. Porete, 79.

63. Ibid., 157–158.

will. Porete spends an entire book elaborating a spirituality that is nearly foreign to modern theology and church practice, utterly, refreshingly so. How we and our ministry methodology beg to be unencumbered as she describes! And how soberly we must consider the fact that the ecclesiastic authorities of her day had her cruelly burned at the stake for distributing her writings. What courage is needed today?

Madame Guyon

Unlike Porete, Madame Guyon is widely known in the Christian world, justly revered for the powerful spirituality that emanated from her writings behind prison walls. Her reaction to torment and affliction reveals a selfless purity that could only revel and rejoice in God's goodness to her. As has been notably said, "Her only crime was that of loving God."⁶⁴ In complying with the wishes of so many for a narration of her life, she begins,

If you are fully convinced that it is in the nothing in man that God establishes his greatest works, you will in part be guarded against disappointment or surprise. He destroys that he might build; for when he is about to rear His sacred temple in us, He first totally razes that vain and pompous edifice, which human art and power had erected, and from its horrible ruins a new structure is formed, by His power only.

Oh that you could comprehend the depth of this mystery, and learn the secrets of the conduct of God, revealed to babes, but hid from the wise and great of this world, who think themselves the Lord's counselors, and capable of investigating His procedures, and suppose that they have attained that divine wisdom hidden from the eyes of all who live in self, and are enveloped in their own works. Who by a lively genius and elevated faculties mount up to Heaven, and think to comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth of God.⁶⁵

Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon suffered greatly in many ways from childhood. Neglect, disease, an unhappy marriage, harsh treatment, deaths in the family, severe opposition by church authorities and more all brought to bear on her every reason to resist spiritual values. When we in Iris face sufferings of various kinds, and are

64. Madame Guyon, *Autobiography of Madame Guyon* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, no date), Introduction, E. J., 5.

65. Ibid., 13–14.

confronted with modern triumphalist theologies so prevalent in the charismatic movement, we are strengthened by examples such as this that point to eternal values and perspectives honed and purified by experience in the fires of testing and affliction. We in Iris are after the *outcome* of God's dealings with us.⁶⁶ Guyon's emphasis on constant prayer and doing all things consciously in the presence of God was a precursor to all that we are learning today.⁶⁷

Certain evangelical critics of Guyon today are highly disturbed by her apparent elevation of a Christ of experience over the Christ of the written Word of God, and they liken her visions, dreams and spiritual experiences to the pantheistic mysticism of the New Age. They see her as deluded by her own imagination and mental health issues, and the idea of union with God as a prideful aberration of true Christianity. We in Iris, however, recognize that the revelation of Jesus Christ in scripture does not stand in opposition to direct experience, but in fact points to it.⁶⁸ Scripture is our instruction, training and correction, but it is not a substitute for knowing the Lord experientially. We put no artificial limits of our own on how close a believer can come to God. We will never claim sinless perfection in this life, but we are always in the process of approaching it by the Spirit.⁶⁹

66. We appreciate Old Testament examples of God's testings, in Job's case noting that he lived hundreds of years longer, was twice as prosperous as before, had the most beautiful daughters in the land, and forever will be glorified for being able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." We treasure the New Testament's perspective: "As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11 NIV11).

67. Conservative evangelicalism has an aversion in general to mysticism's perceived opposition to thinking and the Christ of the Word. Iris steers between the dangers and embraces the aggregate whole. See following discussion of multiple models/perspectives.

68. It does so in many ways, and pointedly so in 1 Cor. 6:17: "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (NAS95).

69. John Crowder has raised serious controversy in the renewal as a prominent spokesperson of "the finished work of the cross" strand of theology regarding sanctification. He stresses mystical experience as normal and necessary in the Christian life, and a ministry of signs and wonders, but sees escape from sin not as a process, but as already accomplished on the cross. All ministry should be done effortlessly and "for fun," with no straining for spiritual progress. See John Crowder, *Mystical Union* (Santa Cruz, CA: Sons of Thunder Ministries & Publications, 2010). Discussion follows below.

St. Symeon the Theologian

We make brief mention here of the Byzantine Christian monk St. Symeon (949–1022) to emphasize his recognition a thousand years ago that the baptism of the Spirit is consciously experienced in a spectrum of ways that include a heightened awareness of the indwelling Trinity, the gift of tears, strong conviction of sin and an outpouring of the fruits of the Spirit. For him the Church’s greatest heresy was the idea that Christians could not experience God directly and intimately as they did in its early years. He wrote often of his own experiences, and called Christians back into a charismatic and prophetic life in the Holy Spirit, not in opposition to the Word, but in conformity to it.⁷⁰ St. Symeon is one of many in church history who have encouraged us to seek continually even greater experience in the Holy Spirit.

Surprise Sithole

Surprise Sithole is the international director of pastors for Iris Global.⁷¹ No description of the origins of Iris Global would complete without including his story, which is engagingly and unforgettable presented in his recent book, *Voice in the Night*.⁷² The sovereignty of God is demonstrated in virtually every aspect of God’s current move in Mozambique, and Sithole’s dramatic initial encounter with God long before my first visit to the country is yet another instance of unmerited grace poured out on a human being. As a boy of fifteen, son of witch doctor parents in a remote bush town in Zambezia Province, Mozambique, Surprise suddenly received a visitation in the form of a powerful, commanding voice in the night that told him he must leave his house immediately.

70. Symeon The New Theologian, “Discourse XXXIII, ‘On Partaking of the Holy Spirit,’” in *The Discourses*, trans. C. J. deCatanzaro, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 339–346.

71. And for the last fifteen years he has served as our national co-director of Iris Global in Mozambique, along with myself and my wife Heidi Baker.

72. Sithole, *Voice in the Night*.

Totally unprepared to face the world on his own, he jumped up, dressed and walked out into the night. He has never seen his parents or his village again in the more than twenty-five years since.⁷³ Through extraordinary hardships and dangers he was supernaturally guided until he found a Christian pastor in neighboring Malawi who explained the origin of that voice and the way of salvation. From that moment Surprise was anointed to preach the gospel, and he did so, walking on foot from village to village knowing only the most fundamental truths of salvation. His faith and preaching were utterly simple, often based on nothing more than John 3:16.

But God was with him in power, and he became a modern-day mystic, a Sadhu Sundar Singh⁷⁴ of Africa. In all these years since he has been experiencing visions almost daily. The Holy Spirit miraculously delivered him repeatedly from the land mines, fighting and massacres of the civil war that raged in the 1970s and 1980s. He speaks seventeen languages; fourteen were suddenly given to him miraculously. Signs and wonders and countless healings follow him, and God has used him to raise the dead on several occasions. His book is the story of how his ministry began, acknowledging that he has no idea why God chose him for such a calling. He did nothing to deserve it or to obtain it. Eventually he was led by God to Iris Global, and our bush ministry was built on the initial churches that Surprise pioneered years before our arrival. He is a continuous student of the word of God, loves theological discussion and understanding, and anyone who knows him considers him the most joyful person they have ever known. His compassion for people and his willingness to spend and be spent for the gospel is unparalleled in our experience. His life is proof of the gospel and the reality of the living God, and his experience in God is a constant guide for our entire ministry. He became our national director in Mozambique, and now speaks around the world radically changing

73. His parents soon died, and the war and its aftermath kept him away until his village was only a distant memory to him.

74. My grandfather H. A. Baker commended Sundar Singh to me as the one person he would like me to emulate spiritually. Singh's writings continue to influence me and my son Elisha Baker deeply.

lives through his understanding of a true mystical relationship with our perfect God and Savior.

Remaining Theological Foundations

The core values of Iris are built on the foregoing foundations, but they represent not just a compilation and repetition of emphases from previous ministries and movements, but a critical amalgam of all that we have learned to the present which we have felt impelled to adopt as the only way forward in our lives and ministry. We are deeply grateful for all the influences that have been summarized thus far in this thesis, but we have also felt free to keep pressing on in God, modifying, mixing and adding to what we have learned from others in the past. We do not wish to be narrow and sectarian, but to be as aware as possible of all sources of spiritual understanding.

We could be badly misunderstood if we were taken as disciples or strict followers of some of these previous streams. We benefit from them in certain ways, but our focus is forward, always learning and growing, correcting and pressing on. We wake up every day in God's grace, cleanly washed in the blood of Jesus, ready to be wrong and to start fresh, never hanging on to the past, but going lower still so as not to miss anything unnecessarily.

Many issues of theology and spirituality have been raised and touched on in this thesis, but just barely. They could all be pursued and researched ad infinitum. The kaleidoscope of church thinking past and present is utterly bewildering even to seasoned scholars and ministers. Every point of doctrine, teaching and procedure so far could be discussed, challenged and variously engaged with to no end. And degrees could be earned in so doing.

In these matters there is mystery and there is closure. To deny mystery is to diminish God and His glory. But also to avoid simplicity and precise focus is to derail our whole enterprise of achieving fruitful ministry in the power and love of God. As Reinhard

Bonnke famously said, “The power of the gospel is in its simplicity.”⁷⁵ Our reactions to our most basic foundations have resulted in increased focus and simplicity. Facing the uneducated and desperate, needy poor of Africa has forced us to use all our intellect, training and background to concentrate our understanding until we have honed the cutting edge of the gospel to the sharpest point possible.

To us that means Jesus and the power of the cross. Paul’s chief concern in all his writings is to prevent the cross from being emptied of its power.⁷⁶ When pressed against a wall with no confidence left in the flesh, challenged by the world’s greatest forces of pride, doubt and intellect, he responds with, “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Christology is central to us, and hugely controversial in church history, and our attitude toward it could be the subject of volumes. In the bush of Africa, our job is to point people to Jesus and the cross. We have no other solution, no other offering, no other method.

As we consider core values, again we ask, What is our goal in ministry? Or in life? What ultimately are we trying to achieve? What is a successful outcome? How high do we aim? Why are we doing this? Is this the best we can do? What are we missing? Is there anything else? Would I give my life for this? Is this as much as there is to life in God and church? Are we defining revival much too narrowly, and with beggarly expectations? What are greater things in God worth? What price will we pay for them? What is salvation, actually, and what is God capable of in our midst?

We hardly think of revival only in terms of numerical growth, or numbers of miracles, or influence, or societal transformation, etc. No, our minds and hearts explode at the thought of what is possible. To us revival is the fulfillment of the deepest and

75. Reinhard Bonnke’s extraordinary evangelistic and healing ministry, and his accompanying teaching, is represented in Reinhard Bonnke, *Faith: The Link with God’s Power* (Frankfurt, Germany: Full Flame GmbH, 2002).

76. Paul’s theology absolutely precludes trust in any source of power and effectiveness besides the power of the cross, pointedly expressed in 1 Cor. 1:17, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (NIV11).

grandest desires of our hearts, things that we do not even dare to dream or express. It is a life so filled with love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit⁷⁷ that we float and do not know what to do with ourselves, so filled are we with joy inexpressible and full of glory—a life spread far and wide to all who are hungry and who thirst after righteousness. It cannot be contained in church walls, seminary classrooms, books and conferences, and it does not thrive under human control and prideful hierarchy. It is sheer gift, so profound that only children can understand it. There is no method to achieve it, save hunger, humility and empty-handedness before God, and the God-given ability to receive wine and milk without cost.⁷⁸

We observe that most movements—ours included—simply need both more and better theology, and more experience. Theology kills when it becomes impersonal. When methodology becomes an “it,” all power is lost. Good theology says that Jesus *is* our sanctification, our methodology, our life. Power, effectiveness and fruitfulness are a person, not goals in themselves. And we may experience power and influence, but that experience falls far short of what our hearts need: Jesus, a person! Resurrections from the dead in Mozambique can be exciting, but they can also be treated impersonally as amazing phenomena.

The emphasis on relationality in modern theological thought regarding the Trinity is helpful and refreshing, and long neglected. Being is relationship, and relationship is communion. Intra-trinitarian relations are seen as helpful models for society on earth. But extremely strange and curious to us is the lack of much discussion in rarified theological circles concerning relationality between human beings and the Trinity,⁷⁹ which *is* the

77. Ministry can sometimes seem to be looking for something “more substantial,” but recognizes the heart and final content of the gospel: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 1:17).

78. Isaiah 55:1.

79. Seeing existence and personhood as relationality is to my mind the crowning contribution of Eastern Orthodox theology, and a major influence on my teaching in Iris Global. John Zizioulas has expounded this Eastern thought densely and at length in a series of books, beginning with John Zizioulas,

Spirit! God's "otherness" and ineffability are too much of an obstacle to many theologians. We have been heavily criticized by otherwise orthodox theologians for our "craving of immediacy," an expression of their insistence on limiting our aspirations to encountering only highly mediated—and necessarily so—liturgical and sacramental forms of God's presence. But we are overwhelmed and astounded unspeakably by the degree to which God does in fact reveal and share Himself with us, and we should not set a ceiling on what is possible. Let God do that!

The Jesus Movement deteriorated sadly into a tension between Word and Spirit, exemplified especially by the ensuing rift between Calvary Chapel and the Vineyard. Inability to understand the relationship between Word and Spirit, and to coordinate them privately and corporately has raised all manner of disagreement. In the early days we were too naïve and "uninitiated" to notice the issue. It is interesting that new Christians are often least bothered by the "tension" as they go hard after God and hungrily devour the Word at the same time. The Word is the recipe, but it is of no value unless we cook. We treasure a love letter from a faraway loved one, but the letter is not the loved one. A marriage manual is needed and helpful, but it is not a marriage. A music score is not music unless it is played. In what sense can we say we have and know the Word unless the Holy Spirit gives us the understanding of it and uses it like a sword?

The mystics of church history present both solutions and problems. "Climbing a ladder" as a learned spiritual technique taught by certain well-known medieval mystics is a far cry from receiving free grace. The view there is that grace is the end product of spiritual progress, rather than its initiation. On the other end of the spectrum we have Quietism, the idea that no effort at all is required to make spiritual progress, and the goal is complete annihilation of the self until it is lost in the sea of union with God. Our sole occupation for all time is contemplation of the divine, a sublime existence so trusting of

God that one is no longer personally concerned with issues of good and evil, turmoil on the earth, or pursuing works of virtue. They are of concern to God only, and all pressure is removed as we remain in love. We in Iris value the mystics' perception of the personal, intimate love of God as supernatural experience, and especially the goal of union with God. But we do not chase phenomena, miracles or "presence" as impersonal goals in themselves. "Mystical" to us is a godly term, referring to the actual experience of Him in the Holy Spirit and in love, not just the chasing of the supernatural. Jesus alone gives meaning to everything. We value union as the ultimate—the ultimate annihilation of "separateness"—but the "ultimate" to us is not the annihilation of relationship. Union with God is so focused, perfect and all-encompassing that it retains relationality with Him, and also embraces our horizontal relationships with each other which define and express our love for Him. We soothe and quiet our souls in love for God, but in His perfection we are also activated to prove our faith and love genuine in response to evil opposition. We rejoice to do good works in Him, and are not simply "quiet!"

We also reject the idea of entire sanctification as the product of the "finished work of the cross." The idea of "finished" needs discussion. The atonement is finished, but as God's workmanship, we are still a work in progress, and He is able to *finish* what He began.⁸⁰ We press forward to what lies ahead, adding to our faith the fruit of the Spirit so that His calling and choosing us may be confirmed.⁸¹ We are not simply moving to maturity from sinless immaturity, but by experience we are learning to distinguish good from evil.⁸² As true sons, we require discipline, that we may share His holiness,⁸³

80. "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy..." (Jude 24).

81. "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election" (2 Pet. 1:10 NIV11).

82. "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:14 NIV11).

83. "They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

implying that we have unholiness that needs correction. Concepts of grace and sanctification are becoming the subject of heated controversy in the “renewal,”⁸⁴ varying between “process” and “hyper-grace,” where not even repentance is required. We take the view from our own experience that sanctification is very much a process, often a very painful process, but that it is God’s process, and that not of ourselves. We experience it as “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). “In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Tim. 2:20–21 NIV11).

Rationally, any consideration of “sparking” revival, “achieving” holiness, “activating” God’s power, “learning” to work miracles, “pulling” heaven down to earth, “practicing” prophecy, “pastoring” renewal, and “training” for ministry must deal with the question of God’s agency vs. human agency. But the subject by now is almost universally avoided, at least in our “stream,” for fear of jeopardizing friendships, getting into fruitless arguments, or perhaps just plain, unmitigated confusion. Or a specific position is taken by the leader, and no discussion occurs among his followers for various reasons. Some are taught to avoid “touching” the Lord’s anointed, others are shut down for their “critical spirit,” and yet others are simply made to feel foolish for thinking anything other than what is preached by their respected leader. But we all have our own relationship with Jesus, and as individuals we have a right to ask where a teacher gets his ideas, and why we should accept them.

The issue of free will/sovereignty is simply one example of the fact that virtually any scriptural understanding comes to us in the form of at least a dichotomy of

84. Many charismatic and other streams claim ownership of the identifier “renewal,” but we are referring in particular to general associations with the outpouring known as “The Toronto Blessing,” understanding that similar outpourings have and are occurring around the world that may not have any specific connection with Toronto.

perspectives, and sometimes a whole spectrum. Is salvation free or expensive (it is free, but it costs us everything); is the Christian life easy or hard (my load is easy, my burden is light, but we struggle to the point of death against sin and in loving God with all our strength); is God one or three; does God want us to be rich or poor (with food and shelter we shall be content, but God richly furnishes us with all good things to enjoy); should we laugh or cry in church; are things getting better or worse in the earth; does God adjust to our dreams, or do we adjust to his; does prayer bring revival, or does God bring prayer; does God want to heal everyone now, or may He at times have other priorities, etc., etc.?

Now the field of science is telling us through experimentation with quantum physics that no one model is sufficient to apprehend reality. We need multiple models to understand truth. If that is true of observed physical reality, how much more of God? No one side of an issue can contain or express God's perfection. Most doctrinal wars are the result of insisting on only one model of perception. But it would be terrible if the truth were located on either one side or the other of most disputes. We are not advocating "balance" or some kind of "middle ground." That would be a dilution of truth on both sides. We need full-bodied models on both sides, or all along the spectrum. Science has shown us that reality can be so hard to accept with our minds, accustomed as they are to familiar lines of observation. We must give God more credit, expand our minds and appreciate His perfection through the use of multiple models and perspectives.

How terrible and unworkable if God wanted everyone to be either rich or poor on this present earth. We have different functions, and we do not want extra baggage or lack to hinder us from those functions. The free will/sovereignty battleground is especially revealing of our need for multiple models and additional understanding. How terrible if we were simply robots without relationship. Equally terrible would be putting our trust in a God who is out of control, and who puts on us the pressure of determining how world history plays out. Open theology is a heavy burden to bear. We hope and pray that we have more to express to God than efforts to direct His power and improve on His will.

Our attitude toward His sovereignty fundamentally affects the nature of our relationship with Him and our ability to trust Him for everything. In facing extreme spiritual challenges, we are at a loss to choose our way, and we utterly rest in a God who knows our dreams and the desires of our hearts better than we do.

Our conclusion thus far in this debate is that our relationship with God is His finest creation. We are not robots, but neither are we independent agents capable of responding to God as He desires. All of heaven is not on the edge of their seats waiting for our response, and for us to “learn” how to pray, etc. They are eager to see how the Holy Spirit will move next. It is the most profound of mysteries, but we are set totally free by virtue of the fact that God *is* relationship (love), and our enjoyment of Him in freedom is His doing. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.⁸⁵ With that understanding we can pursue God, seek His face earnestly, work out our salvation, put away the sin that so easily entangles, and with affection and love submit our requests to Him (so foreign to pressured intercession that tries to “move” an unresponsive God to act compassionately, as though we have more compassion than He does!), enjoying all the time a peaceful trust in His total sovereignty and work in us.

This is of crucial importance in Iris Global. The burden of trying to bring revival and discipleship in our context is unbearable. The strain of trying to save Africa in all its corruption, poverty and witchcraft is crushing, even in tiny measure. Just the effort of trying to transform the life of one street child who has been severely abused and afflicted since earliest memory is beyond us. Yet we see the Holy Spirit radically transform minds and hearts in a flash, such as in water baptism, or from Holy Spirit impartation. Or He may take years to work out His purposes. We take massive comfort in recognizing how God chose to prepare Mozambique for what He has done there. Five hundred years of colonialism and slavery humbled the nation. It was brought lower still by thirty-some years of civil war, total destruction of its infrastructure under communism, floods and

85. 2 Cor. 3:17

famines of devastating severity, the lowest life expectancy in the world. Totally humiliated, its people cried out to God with a hunger and fervor we never before could have imagined. And God's responses in the power of the Holy Spirit could never have been planned or engineered by us. Truly our perfect Savior Jesus is our life, and we want above all else for his Spirit to control us utterly. We are the field of the activity of His mind, as Jonathan Edwards so helpfully observed.⁸⁶

Academic Research on the Miraculous

A listing of the theoretical foundations of the five core values of Iris Global would of course have to include the copious research efforts of three scholars known by all the D.Min. students in our group. Craig Keener's massive two volumes of documentation of miracles are unmatched in scope, and inestimable in their value to those seeking encouragement and grounding in their faith for the miraculous.⁸⁷

Candy Brown's *Testing Prayer* is a prodigious effort to document with painstaking care the positive health effects of proximal intercessory prayer. It includes the detailed medical records of my wife's healing from runaway methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection after doctors had given up on her life.⁸⁸ She offers theological insight as a companion to her empirical research, producing a ground-breaking volume of evidence for miraculous faith healing. Our one necessary comment

86. Robert Jenson opened my eyes wide to ways in which Jonathan Edwards's seemingly unique vision of God's sovereignty solves many theological problems. See Robert Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

87. Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

88. Her atheist Russian doctor in Johannesburg told her she could write her tombstone. In great pain, without her critical IV injections, and assuming responsibility for her death, she checked out of the hospital and flew to Toronto to "see a specialist"—Jesus.

must be that “prayer” itself has no power whatsoever,⁸⁹ but only the God to whom that prayer is addressed. The moment we depersonalize the power of God, we have lost our way. Reading *Testing Prayer* provides little exposure to the emotions of relationality with God that are the climactic point of the exercise of His power. Tasting the glory of God’s love in healing is reduced to cold clinical analysis. Of course we want to get at the cold hard facts, but to attribute healing power to “proximal intercessory prayer” instead of to the extraordinary affection of Jesus is to miss the side of the barn. He cannot be used like that. We understand the issue. To use clinical, noninflammatory, non-relational terminology is “safe,” but it avoids the one factor that determines everything: Jesus!

Jon Ruthven’s volumes, *On the Cessation of the Charismata*⁹⁰ and *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology*,⁹¹ are also fundamental supports for the understandings and values of our ministry. *Cessation* establishes the definition of “definitive,” the last word on the subject, and we rejoice in that conclusion. *What’s Wrong* resonates deeply with us in Iris, as we have long advocated emphasizing the content of scripture proportionately according to the degree to which select components are emphasized. To do so is to avoid “majoring on minors,” and also “missing the forest for the trees.” It is a solid contribution to our understanding of ministry.

Finally, in this sketchy listing of foundational sources, we include Heidi Baker’s Ph.D. dissertation at King’s College, University of London, “Pentecostal Experience: Towards a Reconstructive Theology of Glossolalia.”⁹² She concludes:

The theological reconstruction of glossolalic prayer attempted in this thesis has been a struggle to express the inexpressible. In this struggle to reconstruct a meaningful theology of glossolalic prayer, we have viewed it as a liberating,

89. We read in scripture, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16), but understand the statement to be in the context of a Spirit-empowered life, and dependently abiding in Jesus, the life-giving vine. Anointed, effective prayer is a gift of God. He needs always to receive the credit. The term “faith-based prayer” does not identify the cutting edge: Jesus.

90. Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2011).

91. Jon Ruthven, *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2011).

92. 1996. Our learned, orthodox mentors affectionately referred to us as their “pietist” friends.

democratizing and unifying experience, a transrational devotional language of the heart, and finally, as symbolic of theosis. Our intention has been to express in some modest way what one form of communion and communication with the Triune God might be like.⁹³

Speaking in tongues has always been important to us. It is an aspect of relationship with God and being filled with the Spirit that is not taught to any extensive degree even in our charismatic renewal stream in recent times, but it is commonly accepted and practiced. In our lives and ministry, it has proven to be powerful and necessary. And that assertion could be the subject of another study.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Our discipleship program consists of holding to our core values, which we discuss in detail in the next chapter. We do of course have curricula, classes, schedules, planned outreaches, small-group discipleship gatherings, home groups, a unique Bible school format, a missions school for foreigners and many other activities that are the result of planning and preparation. But these are channels and outlets, not the engine of our ministry.

We could probably add a sixth core value that specially marks Iris, and that is freedom from control issues. We want the Holy Spirit to be in complete control of us. He does not need to be “pastored” and “resisted” to “protect” the flock in meetings or anywhere else. We get no joy out of controlling people’s lives to fit our agendas and ambitions. We are not slaves of planning and organization. We do our best under trying conditions with what we have in these areas, but we are excited to be set free when the Holy Spirit spontaneously trumps our ideas even as we work, speak and lead meetings. He is always the most important thing going on, not our leadership and control.

93. We are deeply grateful for our Pentecostal background, and tongues is a gift probably more appreciated and appropriated for power by Heidi than anyone I know.

94. A study is needed on the place and function of tongues in the current renewal.

But fruitful ministry is more than turning left or right as the Spirit gives us orders. The reason is that His “orders” are infinitely more encompassing than we realize. It is more than teaching sound doctrine and laying hands on the sick. There is a missing ingredient that means everything to God. He simply wants to be loved! If He feels loved—showered with affection—there is nothing He will not do for us. Straining to love Him with disciplined Bible study and controlled ministry programs, and even prescribed devotional techniques, is not love. The mystery of ministry is a contagious, imparted love born of God and in total freedom that makes all the difference. “Do not awaken or arouse love until it so desires,” says the Song of Songs. We “fall” in love with God as we fall under the Spirit’s control. No one is blessed when their lover is straining to love them. God is not blessed by our strain. We should not be ministers and missionaries if we can possibly do anything else. He is the most jealous, emotional and romantic lover in the universe, and He knows if we are really loving Him in our ministries.

Nor does God feel loved if we do not enjoy Him, constantly and to overflowing. Our confidence in Him is reflected in our joy. We choose friends who enjoy us, and in whose company we find joy. In all ministry we are to be the friend of God, making Him feel loved and thrilled to have made us. In return we are filled and thrilled.

We are not in the first place a ministry organization with job descriptions, strategies and goals. We do not “go to work every day and get things done.” We are not an ant hill, where each ant carries out its job precisely carrying massive loads in absolute obedience, but totally devoid of the emotion that we can carry in the Holy Spirit as creatures made in His image. We are a family filled with life. Relationships are all that matters. To obey God in love we need to be set free in the Holy Spirit simply to get happy and mushy! Purity and dedication mean to let nothing detract from our joy in the Lord! We are to be utterly entangled with our God!⁹⁵

95. The phenomenon of “entanglement” observed in quantum physics is perhaps the metaphor that in my experience most completely represents our goal, union with God.

How should we then replicate ourselves, disciple our people and train them for ministry? Of course we provide all the education and skills we can, and impart all the gifts we can. But we will still totally miss the mark unless an indescribable mystery occurs: free, direct, spiritual, supernatural, mystical romance with God, and that without measure.... And we do not know how to accomplish that mystery. That is the point of this project, to demonstrate our utter need of Him, every inch of the way.

Addendum

I do need to add a note expressing my high appreciation for the observations made by Jason Vickers at UTS of the recurrent cycle observed all through church history in which anxiety is replaced by structure, killing outbreaks of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ We see the same tendency. When God shows up, people react in a complete spectrum of ways, with apparent chaos and confusion reigning. But there is life, power, excitement, wonder, joy, and participants respond as they will, some very negatively, others wholeheartedly, and everything in between. Those with eyes to see and ears to hear, and who have been given graciously by God the ability and freedom to receive, will exult. And there will always be plenty of negative fruit as well. And then leaders step in to control the mess and provide helpful guidance. Initially that is good as people are taught the truth, deterred from error and stimulated to cooperation, love and good works. As control, ambition and human agendas gain ascendancy, the people are not served, God is not front and center, and the uncapped joy of the Lord is the first casualty. Seriousness and organization become the religion, and revival goes into another death spiral.

Our heart's desire in Iris Global is that in the gracious mercy of God we will avoid that cycle and spiral as much as possible, and freely embrace the best. We welcome all knowledge, all understanding, all teaching, all experience, all power, all gifts, all

96. Jason Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011).

manifestations, all glory, anything and everything that will overturn the works of the devil and his intentions to separate us from our God!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIVE CORE VALUES OF IRIS GLOBAL AND THEIR APPLICATION

It is one of the ironies of our religious mindset that in our zeal to be strategically “biblical,” we confine our rules of engagement in the ministry to the abstract. We set our minds and hearts on concepts, but do not experience them. We teach the knowledge of God, but do not know Him. We teach love, but do not possess it. We teach holiness, but do not know how to attain it. We teach power, but it eludes us. We teach effectiveness, but are not effective. We teach principles, but they have no life. We teach strategies, but they fail. We teach technique, but are confused. We succeed, but then are humbled. We are trained and qualified, but are not equal to the task. We are doctors of the church, but have lost our way. We construct a religious world, but God is absent from it. We reach the pinnacle of human achievement in ministry, and are left with nothing.

From Abstraction to Reality

And if the core values of Iris are pursued abstractly, they profit nothing. Something absolutely mysterious must happen by the agency of God: they must become ours. We must experience them. They must be given to us. Ministry education is about learning to minister practically. But it is not like learning to be a doctor or an engineer. It is God people need, not our expertise. It is love, peace and joy people need, not our sophisticated abstractions of these. We tell people what to do and how to be, but our instructions frustrate. We feed on abstractions, but starve. We sign up for training, but are left empty. We set goals, but find nothing when they are met.

It is the point of this thesis that we are nothing and have nothing unless we receive what is concrete and real from God. We are dead without His breath. Our education is nothing without Him. Truly all is vanity unless God saves us.

We do not know how to impart our values, except to pray and ask. We can attempt to describe them, as we will here, but whether they take root and bear fruit is a function of God's agency. We state unequivocally at the start of this chapter that our understanding begins with an awareness of our utter dependence on God in fear and trembling. We hold out empty hands in the desperate hope that He will share His nature with us. We take no credit even for our faith, or our choices.

By the grace of God we the leadership of Iris Global do have core values that are personal and not abstract. We live and breath them as the presence of God. We take no credit for the ministry of Iris Global, but recognize that each of these imparted values has affected, shaped and determined everything we have thought and done in Iris. Every one of them is brought to bear on each action we contemplate. We see them as obvious in scripture, and hardly recognized them as living, specific, discrete, non-optional components of our personal relationship with God until we reflected on what has characterized and propelled our ministry all these years.

Reality in Relationship

Our values derive from a singularity, God Himself, a God who is not an impersonal unity, but a trinitarian relationship. And our life is found only in relationship with Him. As he apprehends us, we starve for Him, we crave immediacy, we must know Him, we must find Him, we must live in Him, we must find all that we need in Him. We must be in love. We must be thrilled. We must be secure, romantically fulfilled and exploding with joy. We cannot leave Him for a second. We know how thoroughly frail our frame and constitution are, and that we will die outside of Him. Every desire of our heart is found only in Him. He is not an abstract belief, but our God whom we love.

In turn our core values derive entirely from relationship. Therefore, before we explicate the five individual values, it is appropriate that we do some justice to the fundamental reality of relationship in the life of God. To express this as well as possible at this point, we take generous space in this next section to present again our letter written in July of 2007, complete with scriptures that bear repeating:¹

Relationship in the Secret Place

“A little over four years ago Heidi and I, along with Surprise Sithole, our Mozambican international director, flew to Nairobi in our little Cessna for a leadership conference. On the way back we stopped in Pemba in Mozambique’s far northern province of Cabo Delgado, and for the first time attempted ministry among a people considered unreached and virtually unreachable by many scholars and local mission groups.

“We took a short bus ride into town near the airport, stepped off, and found a group of fourteen or so young men standing nearby. Heidi immediately used her Portuguese to witness to them right there where they stood, and in a few minutes all fourteen were saved and wanted a pastor. On our next trip we got a small plot of land on a hill among a sea of huts, and built a Pemba-style church building out of reeds and stones. It was filled mostly by children, but pastored by our extremely fervent, Spirit-filled Pastor José, still one of our key leaders in Pemba. This last week Pastor José testified at our annual staff retreat that now we have over seven hundred Iris churches in Cabo Delgado Province, a figure we could not have imagined on that first trip.

“Our four years in Pemba have been tumultuous, intense, filled with demonic attacks, violence, threats, opposition from the government, discouragement, theft, loss, disappointments, failures, staff turnover, and the constant, unrelenting demands of

1. Rolland Baker, “Motivation for Africa,” newsletter to the Iris Global mailing list, July 6, 2007, available at <http://irisglobal.org>.

extreme poverty and disease all around us. It almost always seemed that our capabilities and resources were no match for the challenges we faced every day, resulting in a level of chaos and stress that literally threatened our health and lives. Intense witchcraft and a lack of exposure to familiar standards of right and wrong made our work in this very remote part of the world seem all the more impossible. Heidi and I remember many times when we did not know how we could continue, often wondering if we really had good, lasting fruit that was worth the sacrifice.

“We are often asked what the overcoming key to our ministry and growth is. We don’t think in terms of keys or secrets, but of the simplest truths of the gospel. We have learned by experience that there is no way forward when pressed to our extremities but to sacrifice ourselves at every turn for His sake, knowing nothing but Jesus and Him crucified. We must die to live. It is better to give than to receive, and better to love than to be loved. We cannot lose, because we have a perfect Savior who is able to finish what He began in us, if we do not give up and throw away our faith.

“In years past we did not think we could identify with Paul like this, but now we understand more of what he meant: “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:8–9).

“Heidi and I get overwhelmed by our awareness that we are only jars of clay, very fragile and finite, capable of only giving out so much, and with very limited understanding and strength. But we have come to be encouraged by this very state of affairs, because God’s power and glory will become obvious in our weakness: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always

carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. 4:7–10).

"In Pemba we just started another three-month Bible school session with new student pastors from the bush, many of whom are barely aware of any Christian doctrine and still confused about so much. But three of them have already raised the dead and given their testimonies in class! The Holy Spirit is opening hearts and bringing in the harvest more than ever, in spite of our weaknesses. Our churches are monuments to the grace of God. We are asked how we keep them all together, organized and feeling like a unified family, but we can offer no adequate human explanation, in spite of all our efforts. We have learned that He is able to melt hearts and keep people connected in spirit by His own power, and build a hunger for the Savior that conquers every obstacle. This is His revival, His church, His display of glory, and He qualifies us to do His work.

"What motivates us to keep going? What puts energy into our spirits when we run out of answers and resources? How do we stay patient and upbeat when the outlook seems bleak, yet again? Where does our power to live, serve and give come from? The question is important, because missionaries do get tired, discouraged and down. Christians of all kinds run out of motivation, no matter how much they have. Leaders with huge responsibilities lose their peace and joy. Ministries become more like businesses, and preachers more like sales managers. But what makes the Kingdom run? What is the fuel that fires us effortlessly? What is the real thing?

"Every day we find out more of the answers to these most fundamental questions, and every day we learn that what used to motivate us is no longer enough. We are going higher, pressing on to what lies ahead. We keep learning what Jesus is interested in, and lose interest in what we used to pursue. And we learn that unless Jesus is interested in what we are pursuing, the going gets tougher than we can bear.

"But there is a secret place, a hiding place, a lower place, a holy place that exceeds our dreams. It is not found in anything external and impersonal. It is not found

simply in activity, sacrifice and dedication. It is not found in goals, projects, productions and progress. It is not found in finances and growth. It may be missed entirely even when preaching, teaching, training and discipling. It may be forgotten completely when evangelizing and praying for the sick. The greatest and most powerful gifts don't necessarily contain it. Even ministry to the poor may become an impersonal effort that misses that greatest and most intensely motivating creation of God, that supreme display of His glory: relationship!

“Love is a gift of relationship, not just self-sacrifice. The secret place is not necessarily found in a prayer closet or a posture of soaking, or in battling for a just cause, or in a massive prayer and fasting effort. Even the most amazing miracles can leave us lonely and without relationship. We can run out of motivation advancing the most noble ideals and working at all levels to transform society. We can minister until we have no more strength, and still go home and lie in bed without the relationship for which our hearts are made.

“Everything is okay with relationship. It is all that Jesus cares about, all that motivates Him. He could do many more amazing miracles and dazzle the world with His powers, but He is interested only in relationship. The entire creation, all the grandeur of the physical world, and all His works are designed to serve one thing: relationship. Revival has no content without it. Renewal and manifestations are pointless apart from it. Miracles only find their meaning in it. Joy is shallow and groundless unless rooted in it. Without relationship we are the living dead.

“There is no pressure in genuine relationship. When it turns into work, it is gone and finished. It is effortless to maintain. It is not the goal of struggle, but the fire of life. It brings the utmost peace, and washes away all tension. It is the point of living, the substance of existence, the atmosphere of heaven. It motivates to heroic heights, bringing out our best. In relationship we know we are alive, we have arrived, we are satisfied. When we turn away from relationship to pursue anything else, we lose. We have no

strength to give and love without it. It is a haven, a rock, a river of living water, the perfect source of motivation to keep going.

“As our Perfect Savior, Jesus provides us with relationship. For this He died and rose again on our behalf. He provides not only His Word, His promises and His gifts, but also freely fills our lives with relationship in response to the desire He has put in our hearts. No guilt and condemnation can keep us from drinking in all the relationship with Him that we desire. Nothing in our past can block us. No attitudes in others can prevent us from tasting and seeing that He is good. And from this tree of life that is our Savior, we can branch out into more and more relationship with those all around us. He takes away our loneliness. In Him we end our search and find our destination.

“So in this experience of revival in Africa, our values have been refined in the fires of pressure, opposition and disappointment. Thousands of churches and testimonies of supernatural power do not keep us motivated. Huge feeding projects are not enough for us. We need more of a goal than to target people groups and disciple followers. Education and development don’t keep our hearts alive. Mobilizing world-wide support still falls short. Academic missiology lacks the energy that Africa needs.

“No, our hearts must have perfect relationship, a perfect union between us and our Savior, in the Holy Spirit. We were never meant to be alone for a moment. Our whole motive is to live life and do everything together with our God, to take pleasure in His company always. Our power to live comes entirely from our satisfying relationship with Him, and to stay there is to stay in our own private revival that cannot be disturbed by anything else. Only when that relationship is golden, incandescent and pure enough do we have the power to delight in all that God has richly provided for us to enjoy.

“Therefore in Him we do not pursue revival, but rather revival pursues us! Church growth and miracles pursue us. His presence pursues us. He Himself follows us, responds to us, and takes pleasure in making us happy, for we make Him happy. We care how He feels. We satisfy His longing. To stay close to Him is no effort, but a relief, a release, a

door to freedom. To get a miracle is never the point, but in our relationship with Him miracles are a delight for Him to perform on our behalf. In fact, we cannot live without miracles, and in the normal Christian life we recognize that everything is a miracle, “for in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

“Leprosy and AIDS are being healed by God in our churches in DRCongo. Our missionaries in Sudan are being caught up to heaven in visions while stationed in a most dangerous environment. Our Bible school students in South Africa are seeing waves of healing blow through a hospital when doctors and nurses are absent on strike. The dead continue to be raised, and the blind and deaf continue to see and hear, causing whole villages to come to Jesus at a time. The poor and abandoned are fed and taken into families. And yet we press on to the best yet in Him, in faith all the way, as always! There is a massive amount of suffering still in Africa, but we can deal with it only as our motivation is steady, sure and secure, located in the unbreakable bond between us and our God and Savior.”

The Five Core Values of Iris Global

In September of 2010 for the first time we convened our key Iris leaders from bases around the world to pray, soak, worship, dream and find unity together. Well over one hundred missionaries and nationals from dozens of countries descended on little Pemba in our remote corner of Africa. For days we ate and drank, wept, laughed and celebrated together as we built each other up with faith-building encouragement and testimonies. We were awed as we began to grasp the extent of what God has been doing among us, and the strength of our family bonding. We as a missions-oriented body are in fact enjoying God and our life of service to Him to a degree Heidi and I never anticipated thirty years ago when we first headed for the mission field.

The meetings were also a chance for us as leaders to articulate like never before what it is that makes Iris “Iris.” The word is Greek and also Portuguese for “rainbow,” as

Heidi and I began as a Christian dance-drama ministry called “Rainbow Productions.” We saw our different creative talents as colors of a rainbow that the “Son” shines through, giving a beautiful result.

As explained in chapter three, Iris Global shares many values and points of doctrine with the wider Body of Christ, but we have discovered that some key elements of our lives and ministry in Jesus are controversial, although absolutely necessary. We think they should all be normal in the Christian life and in Christian ministries everywhere, not special and unusual. Heidi and I began naïvely in these areas, but now realize we must prize, protect and nurture these values in our hearts, and impart them to others. If we lose any one of these values, Iris would not function and be what it is today. When they all come together, it is as though we have a spiritual chain reaction, generating life and heat in the Spirit! The following five values are not the only critical ones to us, but the Holy Spirit brought them to the forefront of our minds at our leadership meetings.

1. God can be found

We understand that we can find God, and can experience intimacy, communication and companionship with Him in His Presence, if we share His love for righteousness.

Missions has often been taught as unromantic; it is disciplined obedience to the Great Commission. Prayer is hard work, feelings are irrelevant, getting the job done is what counts. We don’t need spiritual experience to proclaim the gospel. We can’t expect immediacy and intimacy to be normal. We can function without His manifest Presence.

We feel the opposite. We’ve gone through enough fire and hardship to know that without actually finding God, in fulfillment of Jer. 29:13, we cannot do what we do. We cannot love with supernatural, unstoppable love unless we actually experience the love of the Father for us first. As the radiance and exact image of the invisible God, Jesus is a spiritual lover, our perfect and ultimate companion. Our first value is to know Him in a

passionate relationship with a love that is stronger than death (Song 8:6). We major first of all not on mission strategy, methods, projects and fundraising, but having the life that a love-starved world needs and craves.

But neither are we attracted to mindless, impersonal mysticism, experience without content and relationship. We pursue passion and truth, not just eastern balance and serenity with no actual basis for happiness. We relate to God with our minds and hearts both; we engage with Him, and find life and joy in our interaction. When we find Him, we find and gain everything.... Without Him, we can do nothing of real value.

2. We depend on miracles

We are totally dependent on Him for everything, and we need and expect miracles of all kinds to sustain us and confirm the gospel in our ministry.

When facing great human need with our human frailties, we rapidly reach the limits of our resources, wisdom and love. We face overwhelming poverty, sickness, demonic attacks and every kind of evil. But with excitement and joy we aim beyond what we can imagine doing in our own strength. We run into the darkness looking for bad news because it is the power of God that gives the world hope. We do not apologize for seeking and valuing power, because without it love is incomplete and ineffectual.

Heidi and I began our life of missions with the dream of living out the Sermon on the Mount, taking Jesus at His word that we did not have to worry about tomorrow. We imagined addressing extreme human need by example, living without anxiety, free to bless always with pure motives, looking to God alone for what our hearts and bodies need. We turn neither to the left nor to the right to gain support. At every obstacle our only confidence is in the cross of Christ, and the conviction that God is thrilled to be trusted for miracles all along our way.

We believe we experience miracles because we value them and ask for them, understanding that He will give them to us only if they will not take us further from Him.

For His sake we will lose our lives daily, knowing that by His power we cannot lose, but will be sustained and become more than conquerors.

The engine behind the growth of Iris in Mozambique has been a marriage of love and power; we do not have to choose between them, but can look forward to doing even greater works than Jesus while remaining in His love.

3. We go to the least of these

We look for revival among the broken, humble and lowly, and start at the bottom with ministry to the poor. God chooses the weak and despised things of the world to shame the proud, demonstrating His own strength and wisdom. Our direction is lower still....

We are not experts. We have not learned how to do church and revival; we only know to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6). We gravitate to the low things of the world. Competition and comparison with others do not suit our DNA. We feel no pressure to succeed and excel, but we exult in doing things well by the power of the Spirit.

God's ways are the reverse of the world's. We waste our time on the uninfluential and the few, stopping for the one. We show where God cares when no one else does. We go to the neglected, the forgotten, the lonely. We will go anywhere, if possible, to minister to the meek and desperate, the poor in spirit, who truly understand their need of God.

4. We are willing to suffer

We understand the value of suffering in the Christian life. Learning to love requires willingness to suffer for the sake of righteousness. Discipline and testing make saints out of us, and produce in us the holiness without which we will not see His face and share His glory. With Paul we rejoice in our weaknesses, for when we are weak we

are strong. Under great pressure we learn to rely on God, who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:9).

Jesus was rewarded for enduring evil opposition without sin. Our reward in heaven will be for the same—doing the will of God.² We resist sin, to the point of shedding our blood, if necessary, by considering His example (Heb. 12:3). Jesus is glorified now not because He exerted His power against His enemies, but because He overcame them with love. That kind of love entails suffering, the willingness to turn the other cheek, go the second mile, deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him. He showed us the only way to be counted worthy, and the angels sing of him, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). There is no shortcut to our heavenly inheritance. “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom. 8:17).

5. We rejoice in the Lord

The joy of the Lord is not optional, and it far outweighs our suffering! In Jesus it becomes our motivation, reward and spiritual weapon. In His Presence is fullness of joy, and with Paul we testify that in all our troubles our joy knows no bounds (2 Cor. 7:4). It is our strength and energy, without which we die.

The supernatural joy of the Lord may be the most controversial of our core values. But our aim is to impart so much of the Holy Spirit that people cannot stop bubbling over with love and joy! We pass through conviction and brokenness, even daily, but we are not left there. The Kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

2. Josef Ton, after his experience with communist persecution in Eastern Europe, has produced what is probably the most thoroughly researched body of biblical, historical and theological material concerning Christian suffering that has been written: Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: The Romanian Missionary Society, 2000).

(Rom. 14:17), in that order. And in His joy we are all the more capable of compassion for others, unfettered by our own sorrows.

Heidi and I could never have endured this long without a river of life and joy flowing out of our innermost beings. We are not cynical and downcast about the world and the church, but are thrilled with our perfect Savior, who is able to finish what He began in us. We gain nothing by being negative, but we overcome the world with faith that we can cast our cares on Him. Joy, laughter and a light heart are not disrespectful of God and incongruous in this world, but are evidence of the life of heaven. We are not referring to cheap and foolish levity that ends in grief, but exultation in the truth and reality of our salvation, a powerful work of the Spirit.

We in these days identify with the captives of Israel who were brought back to Zion:

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him (Ps. 126:2–6).

An Updated Rendition of the Five Values

Three years after our first global team meeting, our Iris leaders from over thirty nations met again at our base in Pemba, Mozambique. For three days in late July, 2013, we united together as intimate family to love, enjoy and encourage each other in the Lord. It was an extraordinary time of marveling at how God had enriched us with ever-increasing depth, fruit and numbers. We felt closer to each other than ever, and more thrilled than ever at the privilege we had of being a part of all that God was doing through us. We could hardly believe that we were truly experiencing more of a down payment on heaven than we had ever expected, which fueled our anticipation for all the more in the future. Not that our ambition was for a greater Iris organization—far from it. We have no

ambition for Iris, but we have a huge ambition to enter more deeply into the Kingdom of God. It was a glorious time.

Toward the end of the first meeting on a Thursday night, I was spontaneously invited to share our five core values once more with our assembly. I considered for a few minutes how to do this as succinctly and to the point as possible, but also as freely and Spirit-led as possible. Below is a transcription of my opening prayer and my latest expression of what our ministry is about and how it runs. It was extremely loose, informal and fun, but such freedom enabled what was probably a much more genuine and complete rendition of our values than I could have expressed through calm deliberation and careful writing.

Opening prayer

“Jesus, I pray that you will accomplish everything you brought everybody here for in these GTM meetings. Don’t let anybody escape. Give them everything you brought them here to give them. I ask, Jesus, that you would give them more in these next few days than they ever dreamed was possible. I ask for shocking, surprising, unexpected things! Fresh, new, special... If you want a people, Lord, to serve you, if you want a people that will follow you, obey you, do anything you ask them to do, if you want instruments, if you want a body, if you want hands and feet and brains—here we are. Here we are, on the altar. We offer ourselves on the altar. We want to give you, Holy Spirit, complete freedom. I don’t want to control the meeting, I don’t want to have an agenda. We have no ambition here, Lord. I, for one, would really like to see what you can do, Jesus, when you have complete freedom. We just want to get out of the way, and see what only you can do. Iris has never been about what we can do, only what you can do. So have your way, Jesus! Have your way! Amen.

The message

“I’m too happy to preach! It is fun to be able to talk to our own family. In other churches, I have to be careful! I have to consider who I’m talking to, and what they’re used to. But, you know, here I can just lose my fear of never being invited back again!

“We’re going to be together for a very long time in heaven, so we might as well get used to it. Remember, God’s never going to stop working on you until He can stand to live with you forever.

“Well, most of you are survivors of Iris. You’ve been with us for years, and the amazing thing is that you came back! I used to think long-term missionaries were people that had been on the mission field for over twenty years, but now I’ve started to think that long-termers for Iris are people that have been working over one year. I think maybe even six months would be more useful. But you’re all here, this is fantastic.

“So I’ve been asked tonight to talk about our ‘core values.’ We actually have some! I would just like to ask if we could start these meetings by coming together to see if we can really get very, very clear about what we’re doing at Iris, and why we’re doing it. Let me ask you right now in the beginning, Mozambican pastors and visitors, Why exactly are you here? Why exactly are you at Iris? Never mind Iris, why are you a missionary? I could even ask, why exactly are you a Christian? Now we’re not ‘preaching Iris.’ This is not an Iris ‘cheerleading campaign.’ This is not a motivational speech to make you more excited about expanding Iris. I mean, Iris is a nice gang, and we do some nice stuff, but it’s not enough to set me on fire! How many of you would like to be set on fire? How many of you know exactly what you’re doing in life, and why you’re doing it? I mean, waking up in the morning and you can’t believe you’re alive, and you are so excited! We want good stuff to happen during these meetings, we want good things to happen in your lives. Better things than you ever thought of! We don’t want you to just survive another GTM. We want you to get something you never dreamed of. I’m always

asking Jesus for things that I haven't seen, or imagined, or touched, or understood yet. I REALLY don't want another year like last year. How many would rather move on from last year? The Christian life is exciting because we have an infinite God, and there's always more in the future that's better than anything we've had so far.

"Most ministry and missions organizations have their annual meetings, and they try to set reasonable, attainable, feasible goals. They want to set goals that seem attainable so they don't get discouraged! Heidi and I have never actually been that realistic. We've never tried to set a goal that we thought we could reach. We just get bored easily.

The first core value

"Okay, let's think about 'core values.' What is important to us? What are we here for? What is at the top of the list? What are we trying to do? What is it that we want? What do we really believe in? What lights our fire? What makes us happy? What is worth suffering for? What is worth giving our lives away for? What's worth getting up in the morning for? What is it that makes us tick? What makes us move?

"I think we need to ask ourselves this because I see some bored missionaries! I see some tired missionaries that don't like what they're doing that day. I've actually seen some people sleep in church. I've even seen some of our missionaries walk out of our church on Sunday mornings! What would make church the most exciting place in the world? What would make these mats in this tent tonight the most exciting place on the planet? What could God possibly DO to you, to make it worth you flying all this way? I'd say quite a lot! You can be afraid of that...is anybody afraid of what God might do to you tonight? Does anybody WANT God to do something to you tonight? That's nearly everybody.

"Okay, what do we want. One thing we could say is 'revival.' How many want revival? Something needs to happen if we all want revival. You couldn't be Christian if

you didn't want revival. REVIVAL, who wants it? YES, REVIVAL. What does 'revival' mean? Because most of us, a lot of the time, when we think of revival, we're interested—but we're not really overpowered with the idea of it. I can remember in the States, years ago before we came here, sitting in public restaurants reading books on revival and sobbing my head off—right in the middle of public restaurants because I wanted revival so badly! There have been times that I have thought, Revival is the only thing we can live for, this is it, we have to have revival, there isn't anything else! But not everybody is that excited about revival. And there are all kinds of ideas about what it is. Now, for example, a lot of people call revival, 'churches that get lots bigger.' Some people call revival 'huge offerings.' I've heard people get so excited at conferences because they've taken in more money in an offering than ever in the history of their conference. That gets some people excited; 'Wow, did you see the offering tonight!' Sometimes it's a huge number of decision cards—and that is exciting! Why would you be a missionary if you didn't want to see people saved and go to heaven that otherwise would not? Do you realize at least one hundred thousand people die every day in the world without the Lord? One hundred thousand people every day. There is a heaven, there is a hell, and this is extremely serious. It's infinitely serious. We cannot be too overwhelmed with the challenge of evangelization. How is it possible even for us to enjoy conferences, eat lots of food, have a happy time with each other, just relaxing...yet while we are speaking tens of thousands of people have died? We're talking prosperity, we're talking blessing, we're talking enjoying 'heaven on earth,' and tens of thousands of people are going to hell while we're enjoying ourselves.

"And then we have the idea of 'transformation.' We want heaven on earth. Well, so do I. I preached for a long time, I want us to enjoy a down payment of heaven on earth at our 'Joy Base' here more than anywhere else on the earth. I would LOVE for Pemba to be 'heaven on earth.' I would love for the country to be transformed. I would love for all of the cars to work. I would love for the electricity to be on twenty-four hours a day. I

would love to turn the tap on the base and have water come out. I would love to be able to buy all the chocolate I want downtown. I would like to have a jet airplane. I'd like to have a university that teaches math and physics. I would like to have more cameras. I would like every family, every hut in Africa to have a refrigerator. I would like flushed toilets on outreach. My ultimate mission statement: a Mac [computer] in every shack!

“I just want everything to work. Is that too much to ask? Yes, I’d like schools that teach something. I’d like some doctors in the hospitals. I’d like some medicine in the hospitals. Yes, I would really love to see Mozambique be prosperous and healthy, and together. I would like to be able to grow anything! Yeah, I would just like to see heaven on earth! Wouldn’t you like that?!

“But let’s talk a little bit about what heaven IS actually. For one thing, Jesus said the ‘kingdom of God’ is not some place you can point to—it’s inside you. We’re preaching the kingdom and His righteousness; it’s inside you. You cannot see it; the best part is inside. Everybody can carry heaven inside.

“Now the question is, suppose we had transformation outwardly. Suppose God gave you every object, every outward thing that you asked for. Suppose you had so much faith you could just bring anything into existence that you wanted. Something has been happening to me these last few years, and especially recently. You know there’s all kinds of good things we can do. We can build things, organize things, fix things and teach things. And many organizations concentrate on exactly that. These things give us a measure of satisfaction, a measure of interest. We can work on feeding people. Helping people medically is rewarding. But in speaking to our Iris leadership, I want to say something here. I’m hungry for more than that! I’m hungry for much, much more than outward, physical transformation. As great and as good as these things are, they are absolutely not enough for your heart. They are not enough to be the focus of Iris. Not enough to be the reason we sacrifice and labor, and do all that we do. Our hearts are hungry for more than that. Our hearts are hungry for Somebody. Our hearts are hungry to

feel and to experience Love, Peace and Joy. Our hearts need to be on fire for a reason! Our hearts long to be in love with a Perfect Person. Our hearts long for a perfect love affair. Our hearts have deep, deep, DEEP desires. Our hearts long for something we cannot even express. Our hearts long for our God! Amen?

“Revival to me means your desire for God gets so extreme, so red hot, so fiery—that’s all you want! That doesn’t mean we get nothing in the end. That means we get everything at the end! Paul says in Romans 8, ‘If God did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with Him, give us all things?’ Jesus is ALL you need and everything you need! Everything good you could ever desire is inside him. How can we express that massive, ultimate need, and our desire to find him and experience Him?

“Now God is capable of making you far more alive, happier and more excited than you could possibly imagine. I have known and seen examples of people that are so extremely filled they can hardly stand it. The Spirit of God can fill you with light, I mean really fire you up! He’s the One who gives you joy! He’s the One who gives you peace! He’s the One who gives love! It’s an appetite for Him that we need. The Bible promises us something. God says to the prophet Jeremiah, ‘You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.’ This is our Iris number one core value. We must find Him, know Him, have Him! He must be our most valuable possession! Nothing else matters!

“What we are talking about tonight are the five Iris core values that have kept Heidi and I going. Three years ago at our last GTM, I realized these five things are the core values that have made Iris distinctive and have kept it going despite every sort of opposition. They are not our only values; we share many, many values with the church at large. But these five values are controversial, and are not shared by the whole Church. They are essential and important to us; we would not be here today without all five of these. The reason this first core value is so controversial is that many people have given

up finding God and experiencing him, at least to any great extent. But what keeps us going is believing, knowing and being confident that everyday, all the time, we can find Him more, experience Him more and be more full of His Spirit.

“We want to do much more than build roads, buildings and schools. We just want Him. We want to be deeply, deeply, DEEPLY in love with Him! We want to be thrilled by God Himself! How many would like to leave tonight just being THRILLED by God Himself? Yes, we’ve done good things, and built farms and schools...but I want something perfect! I want something that moves me, stirs me, stirs my emotions! I don’t want to be dead! I just don’t want to be bored! I don’t just want to do good things. I haven’t gotten there yet. I learn more everyday. But that’s our direction! This is our direction! I know that it is possible, everyday, for us to be closer to God, more thrilled by Him, more intimate with Him, more on track to what really, truly satisfies us. Everything else is okay. It’s good, but the closer I get to God, the older I get in life, the more I want to concentrate on just one thing. I want a revival, I want a movement here that focuses right on Jesus’ face and nothing else! I’m serious, I want Iris to focus on Jesus’ face and nothing else! We only have one hope! One direction, one purpose, one reason, one point of doing what we do. Jesus is not just some Savior that gives us power, and helps us get what we want. We don’t just go to Jesus because we want stuff! We don’t go to Jesus because what we’re really interested in is something over here, and we want him to make us successful at doing it. I would like to make everybody prosperous! I would love to get everybody out of wheelchairs in Pemba. But that still wouldn’t be enough! We can have massive testimonies, we can have huge growth, we can have the most amazing miracles all over the place, and that STILL would not be enough.

“JESUS still has to be the point of everything. He’s the one we enjoy, He’s the one we’re excited about, He’s the one we relate to. It’s my relationship with Him that means everything. I don’t just learn so I can have His power, I don’t just learn how to pray, I don’t just learn how to missions, I don’t just learn how to do strategies—I want to

relate to Him! I want a relationship with Him! I want to be in love! I want to be alive! He's alive! I don't think He's bored everyday. I don't think He runs out of ideas everyday. I don't think He gets tired and drained and burned out. I want the life that is in Him! I want to know what makes Him happy! I want the joy that He has. I want the mind that He has. I want the relationship. That's what makes human beings happy, a relationship with the Lord. I don't just want verses in a Bible. I don't just want correct doctrine. I don't just want a library of books on theology. I want more than a big church. I want more than anointing. I want more than to knock people down and make them laugh. I want JESUS! I want the very person who died for my sins. I want the person who hung on the cross for me. I want the person who suffered what I should have suffered. I want Him, and know that He will come to me because He has proven by the cross that He loves me. That's why I emphasize Jesus! He is the fullness of the Godhead, the fullness of the Deity in bodily form. He's our perfect companion. We need a perfect companion forever and ever and ever and ever. We have families, we have wives, we have husbands, we have children, but we need a perfect One, an eternal, infinite companion. One that is able to fill us with the life that He has. He really is all we have, our only desire.

"Now, He can do a lot of things. I am tired of people telling me what He cannot do. I used to think that only non-charismatics told me those things. But these days I am hearing that there's lots of things that God cannot do. God's changing! He's not the same anymore! Even though in the Bible God says, 'I am not a man, that I should change my mind.' I don't want to change God's mind; I want God to change my mind. I keep hearing that God is not in control, that He submits Himself to our will. That there are so many things He cannot do because we haven't prayed hard enough, or that we don't desire holiness enough. God is 'stuck' because we aren't okay. I am so tired of having even charismatics tell me what God cannot do. They say the reason we don't have revival, the reason things don't happen is that we don't have our act together. That would be discouraging, because I need to be changed a lot more than God. I need God to finish

what He began in me. I need to be able to rest in that when I go to bed, and trust that my God is able to fix me, change me and help me! I don't want to think everyday that God cannot help me anymore, He cannot do anymore because I am just inadequate and beyond help. I want to worship a God that is actually a perfect Savior and who can do anything He wants! I actually do believe that Jesus our perfect Savior is all-powerful. I'm excited by a God that is all-powerful. I'm thrilled to be worshipping a God, a perfect companion, to be in love with somebody who is really, truly POWERFUL. I don't think He's waiting for anything. I don't think He's stuck by anything. God fired this revival in Mozambique. He picked up Supresa when he was fifteen years old, a son of witch doctors who had no knowledge of God whatsoever. Shouldn't that sign thrill us? We can pray in confidence that God is able to change people, He's able to convict them, able to strengthen them and set them on a course. He doesn't explain everything. He doesn't explain why He allows terrible things to happen. He doesn't explain why all kinds of things happen. But I know one thing. Our troubles in life cause us to depend completely, one hundred percent on God. I would have been discouraged so many times in the history of Iris if I thought God was stuck, and I had to change or we had to fix something before He would help us anymore. Of course we must change, but we cannot until He changes us.

The second core value

“Our second core value is that we depend on God for everything. And I do mean EVERYTHING. That's controversial! Not everybody agrees with that! I hear all the time, God will do this for you, but He won't do that for you. He'll do this, but you have to decide that. Maybe He'll do this, but He might do that. This is true. As He works in us, yes, we do present our requests to God. Yes, we do pray and ask Him for things. Yes, we do exercise faith in Him. Yes, we do choose Him. Yes, we do love one another in obedience to Him. Yes, we seek Him, chase Him and hunger after Him the way the Bible

tells us to do. But He has to do something in us first. He has to save us and change us! He has to do something in our hearts before we can do any of these things. So for that reason, I say that Jesus is an all-powerful and perfect Savior.

“What do I do if I don’t have enough love? I depend on Jesus for more! What do I do if I don’t understand what to do next? I depend on Jesus to help me understand. What do we do if we don’t have enough money? I don’t write a newsletter, I depend on Jesus for more. What if I’m not anointed enough for certain things? I ask Jesus and depend on Him to give me everything that’s good. I don’t trust in myself at all. Paul says in the New Testament that we put no confidence in the flesh. No means zero, nada...we do not depend on ourselves for anything. We don’t depend on the Body of Christ either. When we need something we don’t just write a desperate letter to the Body of Christ and say, ‘Please help us!’ It’s fantastic to trust in an all-powerful, all-perfect Savior. I need to be changed a lot more. I’m not a finished work yet. Are you a finished work? How many finished works do we have here? But God is able to finish what He began in you. He’s not finished with you; He’s at work in you.

“God really is all-powerful and He can do anything He likes. He can change the hardest, meanest, most stubborn, murderous, most filthy sinner on the planet. Consider Saul. He was a Pharisee out to kill every Christian he could. And in three days God turns him into the first apostle, the first missionary—as an example for us all. I believe God can do that for anybody He wants! Of course you ask, ‘Why doesn’t He do that for everybody? Why doesn’t He treat everybody the same? How come some people get visions in the night who have never even heard of the name of Jesus?’ But I have made a choice, and I believe this choice is from God. I would rather trust God’s all-powerful sovereignty than be left with a God who’s out of control and we don’t know what’s going to happen. I just choose to trust Him! He knows more than I do! He’s more powerful than I am! I’m the pot, He’s the potter! Who am I to argue back to the Person who made me? So I intercede, I pray, I love people, I serve people, I want to lead people to God. It’s

amazing how we can have a free relationship with God who is powerful and sovereign. That's God's perfection. That's His beauty. Let's not underestimate Him! He creates the relationship that we have with Him. It's fabulous to have a FREE relationship with a God who is all powerful. Oh, He can satisfy hearts. The Bible says, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom!' You can make your decisions, but you can't make good decisions unless the Holy Spirit is in you. We're not free to make beautiful, good, perfect decisions unless we're controlled by the Holy Spirit. And so we trust God for absolutely everything at Iris Ministries. We trust God for people. We trust God for money. We trust God for timing. We trust God for healing. We trust God for materials. We trust God for everything! Amen?

"We have a perfect Savior. That's why we love Him and we want Him. I don't know why people follow religions that don't work, and don't have a powerful God, and have all these crazy theologies. We want a God who is a perfect Savior! These first two core values are very, very big deals to me. That's why I'm spending most of my time on them. I'll be quick with the third one.

The third core value

"HUMILITY. When faced with such a perfect, glorious God, all we can do is go lower still. Bow before Him broken and contrite. Become nothing. There's no room for ambition in the kingdom of heaven.

People ask me, 'Pray for me, impart to me, I want gifts, I want power!' My first advice is to go lower. Become nothing at all, until your motives are pure, until there's no pressure on you. When there's no pressure on you, there's no competition. It's so much fun to be nothing! It's so relaxing not to have to prove anything. It's so wonderful to see your brothers and everybody else doing better than you, being more anointed than you... who cares?! It's fabulous to bless people for their success. It's great to be able to compliment people and lift them up. You don't even care where you are at the table.

Because you have a perfect Savior, you are set! If you have the number one core value, if you have Him, you don't have to worry about anything else!

“Apostle Paul says in Philippians, ‘Have no anxiety about anything.’ And God just loves the humble. He is opposed to the proud and gives grace to the humble. It’s the only way to go. You want the key to the Christian life, want to please God, want to get more anointing? Just keep going lower, and lower... And when you’ve gotten as low as possible, go lower! I have some friends who wanted to have a humility contest. Then Jesus showed up and said, ‘Hey, if you’re going to do that, can I play?’ Here’s Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty God, and He’s also the most humble person in the universe! Spiritual pride and control issues are rampant throughout the church. East, west, poor, rich—they are everywhere.

“We want Iris Global to be totally free of all these issues. Let’s just have one big humility contest! I’m more humble than you! Pastors, you really need to honor one another, go lower still and not have a trace of ambition, except to please Him. God likes to demonstrate that Himself by going to the poor and to the least of these. At Iris Global we’ve always believed that the most likely place to find revival is among the poor. The most likely place to see a move of God is among the humble, the nobodies, the least of these, the ones with no influence.

“And now for eighteen years Iris does have influence and does have favor with many people. But if in the beginning we had tried to get that favor and influence, we would have never survived. If in 1995 we had tried to impress the government and tried to get pastors to follow us, we would not still be here. But we went to kids on the street whom the churches didn’t want, the government didn’t want. NOBODY wanted them. God loves to make something great out of nothing to prove His power and grace! He just loves to work with the humble and the nobodies. So, this is an Iris core value.

“We don’t begin by trying to have ‘pastors’ luncheons’ and meetings with political leaders. Those things come later. That’s not where we start. We don’t try to get favor.

Some of the most influential people today are people that never tried to get influence. The most admired people, the people that shape global opinion, are people that didn't try to do that. Mother Teresa is a perfect example. The people whom the world admires the most are people who have no personal ambition—they just don't care about themselves. So, this is important for us leaders to understand. We need to be very clear. We just love people, we just do what's good, we just please our God, we humble ourselves under the hand of our mighty God, and He exalts us at the proper time. We always go lower. Whenever there's a problem the answer is to go lower.

The fourth core value

“We are willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel. Suffering for the gospel doesn't mean being unhappy. It actually can make you very, very happy, because you're willing to show love to people out of love for God! You're willing to prove your love, and by proving your love you will get a response from God. To the degree that we share in the sufferings of Christ, to the degree we are willing to show the world a love they have never seen before, we share in His reward and joy. We don't just pray for protection against anybody hurting us, or doing anything that bothers us. We learn the joy of loving no matter what anybody does to us or how they treat us. It's a joy to prove our love for God in this way! We're not stupid; we don't look for suffering. We don't try to suffer, but we're willing to according to the will of God. The Bible tell us that He rewards those who suffer according to His will.

“This is important to us as ministers and leaders. We are not loving, and we are not doing people a favor by promising them God will protect them from all suffering. If He protected you from every chance to demonstrate the infinite, perfect, godly love that He has, He would rob you of your joy and your reward! I've heard it said, ‘We don't believe in the theology of Job anymore.’ The New Testament tells us of the outcome of God's dealings with Job. Job suffered a lot, and he didn't know when the suffering would

end. But he never lost his faith. The result was that he lived hundreds of years longer, he was twice as prosperous as he was before, he had the most beautiful daughters in the land, and forever in heaven he will be glorified for being able to say, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust him!’ And we as leaders in Iris need to have that same attitude.

“I don’t care how hard it gets. I don’t care if God kills us—we’re still going to trust our perfect Savior! I came to Mozambique ready to die right at the beginning. My life is gone. We’re dead to the old life. Our lives do not belong to us. I don’t want to take ownership of my life; I don’t want to try to get God to give me everything I want in life. I want Him to change me! I want Him to give me His desires! I want His purity, His motives. That’s what makes me relax! That’s what makes me chill and just enjoy our God. I don’t want prayer to be a constant struggle with God, trying to get Him to do something different than what He wants. Some people say, ‘You know your prayer works if you can get God to change. I don’t want God to change. He knows my desires better than I do. That doesn’t mean I don’t ask Him for things. I ask Him for all kinds of things. But I trust Him for what’s perfect. So, this is important, Iris leaders. We have to put up with whatever to fulfill God’s purpose for our lives and get the best possible resurrection, to get the best possible reward, to get as close to God as we possibly can.

The fifth core value

“Last one. The most important one! Actually, they’re all the same. This took me a lot to understand, years and years to understand. And I’m still learning more everyday. And that is that life without joy is absolutely pointless! There’s no point to giving God your life, serving Him, laying down, suffering and doing everything He says—if you don’t enjoy Him! If at the end of the day you’re not happy—then what’s the point of everything? Now church, Mozambicans, pastors—get this! Paul says in Philippians—this is the Bible, this is scripture, this is a command, this is not a suggestion, this is so you can stay alive—‘Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice!’ Nehemiah says, ‘The joy of the

Lord is your strength!' All right, pastors, how many want twice as much strength? Then you're going to need twice as much joy! It's just that simple. It's the persecuted Christians in China who taught me that joy is the energy of the Holy Spirit. Suffering Christians being persecuted are saying that JOY is the energy of the Holy Spirit! So if you just walk out of here kind of bored, then I've completely failed tonight. All the other things I've said before are for your joy! Jesus, the night before He died, told His disciples, 'I've told you all these things so that your joy might be complete.' Remember that in Bible school, remember that when you teach your people, when you preach in church on Sunday. You do all these things so that your joy may be complete! For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross. It was His motivation for everything He did. You are going to need the same motivation. This was hard for me to learn! That when you're down and unhappy and discouraged and you don't know what to do, when you have to force yourself through a day, when you're not happy and you're not full, that's not the reason you were made! If you're down and discouraged, you're not doing the will of God! You are not obeying God, you are not in His will, unless you are full of the Holy Spirit. Something needs to change. You need an infilling!

"Joy was also the reward that the Father gave Jesus. God said, 'Because you loved righteousness and hated wickedness, I will anoint you with the oil of joy.' How many want to be anointed with the oil of joy? I mean drenched, anointed! Some people think that this is not important, that it's only for some people. You may not like it, but you need it! You NEED it! Pastors, pastors, pastors, you need to laugh! We all need to laugh more tomorrow than we did today! It's your biggest weapon. Joy is your biggest weapon! If you can laugh when things get really, really, really tough, if you can laugh with the joy of the Lord—that's your weapon in the face of the devil! I want everybody at Iris to have this weapon against the devil! Everybody at Iris given the power to laugh in the devil's face! Oh, I have testimonies, when people faced sorrow and death, and God just told them to laugh. I'm saying, Iris family, that we desperately need to laugh—as well as cry,

as well as everything else. I know we shed a lot of tears, but that's not how we should end up. Every single day we shed tears, but I don't think that's how we should end every day. We need to laugh at the end of every day! Laugh really hard at the end of every day! That's God's gift to you! I found out that Jesus is not only a teacher, a healer, a wise miracle worker and everything else, but he's also an entertainer. He's also very, very funny. He's very enjoyable to be around! The most fun thing in the world is to be a Christian. If it's not fun for you, try something else. God gives you more joy than any other god. I want Iris to be known for its joy! This is our direction, this is our core value. It's not optional! Okay? Get that!

“There it is! We need God, we need miracles, we need to be humble, go lower still and go to the poor, the gospel gives us joy as a reward, and at the end we are very, very, very happy to have found our God!”

Application

I believe it is obvious how these core values interact and affect all that we do in Iris. These are not procedures, they are not methods, they are not courses, they are not programs to follow. They are not specific actions. They are not objective content that can be taught. They have to be caught, imparted miraculously. They are an atmosphere, an attitude, a place, an energy, a flavor. They are light and heat. They thrill. They motivate. They direct. They are spontaneous. They blend in perfection. They produce results. They create life. They minister. They bear fruit. They last. They make the heart throb and swell. They dazzle. They are beyond comprehension. They amaze. They are the kingdom. They are the scripture. They are the plain gospel once and for all delivered to the saints. They are the good news of great joy proclaimed by the angels on the night of Jesus' birth. They are the hope of the world, without which ministry is crippled.

They are not new. They are not clever. They are not the invention and discovery of Iris Global. They are not unique to Iris. They are the inheritance of every believer.

They are under attack at every point by the enemy. They are worth proclaiming and dying for.

Most fundamentally, they are not “values,” but a Person. They are not abstract; they are relational. Each of them contributes to the nature of true relationship in the kingdom of God and the heart of Jesus. They are the workmanship of the Creator. They are necessary. Every small and specific decision we make is under their influence.

Iris Global is not monolithic and pure through and through. The values have not completely percolated among our widespread churches and ministries. But they have been the catalyst and made the critical difference. They are the “DNA” of Iris. They are the distillation of the whole counsel of God that we have received, and our prayer is that they will permeate the life and work of Iris by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So when we have lost our motivation and are hearts run dry, we seek His face. When we are in need, we trust in His supply. When we are at the end of ourselves, we go lower still and to the least of these. When faced with hardship and persecution, we will not lose our reward by retreating. And our boundless joy will supply us with all the energy and direction we need. Our course in ministry is to share with the world what we have received to the limit of the ability He gives us.

In the next chapter, though greatly limited by space, we share some descriptive narratives of how these values have actually played out in the history of Iris.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE: THE VISION TESTED

Our first several years in Mozambique were extraordinarily difficult. We had been partially prepared by our street ministries in Hong Kong and London, but our challenges in Africa reached the point of absurdity to many who could not comprehend our motivation in persevering. Then through the years at many repeated points, just when we thought we had been through the worst of our testings, even greater faith challenges would confront us. Our life and ministry have been a course of ever-increasing faith as we have held onto our core values, which have always sustained us in the Lord.

In this chapter we provide, as vividly and descriptively as possible, a glimpse into the world of Iris that reveals a detailed portrait of our ministry approach and results. Most pointedly our aim is to show how our core values demonstrate God's initiative and action as the Spirit has led us to follow Him. We do this by quoting excerpts from the stream of reports we wrote throughout our time in Mozambique, usually in present-tense to give the reader a sense of immediacy.

Clearly our "methodology" and "results" are not presented clinically and dispassionately. Our research is not strictly detached, cerebral, objective and scientific. Successful ministry is to us full of life and the presence of God. For us to portray the outworking of our values requires art and emotion, description and feel. Every time we feed a child, pray for the sick, impart the Spirit, trust in the Lord, turn the other cheek, worship on our faces and rejoice to be alive, we put into action our core values.

The following excerpts convey by example the heart of what we have to contribute to the subject of learning to minister. They comprise a summary report of our

years of “action research” in a form that we feel most accurately reveals what we have learned.

29 November 1995

Recently Heidi found a girl lying along the roadside, covered with terrible infected sores from head to toe. She was wearing only a rag with a string for underwear. Heidi got her to the hospital, and the staff said it would take four days just to get the infections down enough to diagnose her problem. But now the girl is much better and is going to make it. We are sure she would have died shortly if she had been left to herself.

Most people have the attitude that the problems of Africa are huge and hopeless, and that missionaries can only make a tiny difference. Soon we'll be crushed by the giant wheel of Satan's destructive, hateful power, and we'll die with very little to show for our sacrifices. However, we glory in a mighty God, and our God is angry at what our enemy has done to Africa and the whole world. He is going to do something about it, far more than we think. He is awesome, and His mercy and grace are going to fall like sweet, spring rain on multitudes worldwide. May we stay immersed in the river of life that flows from the Father's heart, and be changed and equipped by His Spirit to participate in His work. And may we be in love, so in love with Jesus and each other. The Christian life is at center an endless romance, and let's never let that romance die.

19 January 1996

If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:10–11)

Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds—his name is the Lord—and rejoice before him. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. (Psalm 68:4–6)

Loneliness may be the most terrible scourge of the human spirit there is. Its love-starved emptiness threatens pain and terror as it advances, destroying all joy and hope in its path. In Mozambique, the world's poorest country, loneliness strikes abandoned children in huge numbers and with wicked ferocity. We can choose to look away, or in Jesus we can open our hearts to see, feel and absorb the awful damage that Satan has done to so many. If we have it in our spirits to look for and rescue the lost and hurting, if we will not shield ourselves from an awareness of the overwhelming need, if we will intercede desperately and brokenly for children who are not even our own, we will participate in God's nature. We will share in his glory and future. We will see His salvation and deliverance. We will be part of his plan. We will be useful to Him, a pleasure to Him, an altogether worthy and romantic delight to His heart.

Not long ago a friend was praying for me and for the work Heidi and I are doing in Mozambique. She saw a vision of black storm clouds over the country, the hideous mark of unrelenting war, famine, disease and death. But then she saw an opening in the clouds overhead. Serene blue sky appeared through a widening circle and a shaft of light beamed down into Mozambique. The Father's hand appeared, and as He pointed His finger a stream of angels began to descend into that poorest of poor nations. In recent weeks we have felt discouragement over Mozambique's situation very nearly too great to bear. But then from out of God's heart we have also felt sudden strength, an immediate resolve to resist the devil fiercely and undo his damage, and to offer our lives again as living sacrifices for the Lord's purposes. God's magnificent promises will not fail, and we will not faint and lose heart. Instead we will endure and live to marvel at what God has planned for our lives and for this African country. We rejoice in the Father's love and goodness, reveling continually in His care, and know that we do in fact have the power of heaven and the angels before us and behind us as we seek to do the Father's will.

About a year ago Heidi and I were alerted to the existence of a financially strapped children's institution desperately in need of a foreign sponsor. It was founded during the Portuguese colonial days many decades ago as a correctional institution for delinquent minors. Its facilities were thoughtfully and efficiently designed; it had a slaughterhouse, bakery, machine shop, pig sty, chicken coop, wells and water towers, administration buildings, classrooms, dormitories, and even a small medical clinic—fifty-four structures in all. It is spread out and uncrowded on a large, breezy, beautiful peace of land right along the ocean about six miles north of the capital city of Maputo. About a square mile, or 640 acres, it has plenty of room for further development. Its shortened Portuguese name is "Chihango."

Almost twenty years of civil war and socialism have reduced the property's facilities almost to ruins. The government has had no money to maintain anything. Marauding, drunken gangs have long since stolen everything of value, ripping out electrical hardware and plumbing and even tearing out door jambs and windows for firewood. Phone lines are torn down and taken away in the night for their copper. Plumbing is broken down. Sewage lines and septic tanks have been clogged and overflowing for years. Weeds and dust cover nearly everything. Windows are broken. Worse, there has been almost no food supply. The children's recent store of maize, given by a donor some time ago, has given out, and now each day they are down to a handful of rice and a bit of tea in the morning.

Early in 1995 Heidi and I submitted a proposal to the Mozambican government, offering to develop the property for humanitarian and spiritual purposes under Iris Ministries. Only twice in the previous ten years have there been any other offers of help, but none materialized. The government doubted our viability and resolve as well, and stalled for months in giving a response. Eventually a group of officials gathered together

and verbally agreed in principle to allow us the full and free use of the land for the purposes outlined in our proposal.

We immediately began to visit Chihango to minister to the children. We didn't have much of anything to offer materially, but we started daily meetings. A few months ago these children knew nothing of God. They had never had anything really good happen to them. Now they have all been touched by the Spirit and confessed their faith in Jesus. Each day they eagerly await our truck and its load of workers. If we're late, they wait patiently. They all run to the meetings. They have learned to believe in Jesus and love and worship Him. They laugh and sing songs of praise throughout the day. They are hungry for prayer. They call out to God with tears. A few days ago they followed Heidi all around the property on a "prayer march," laying hands on every building and anointing everything with oil, declaring God's promises and leaning on God for an abundant, steady flow of provision. Heidi preached her heart out to them, telling them that they cannot wait for Westerners. God will use them to repair Chihango. God will raise them up spiritually, and they will be a rich blessing to their country—if they repent and stop their lying, stealing and fighting. And so the Holy Spirit is moving on the children more each day. Even staff members, previously attached to the property by the country's communist system, are changing their attitudes and ways. Spontaneously they are cleaning up their rooms, washing feces off their floors and beginning to paint their walls. They want to study again in school, and some are even insisting on an immediate Bible school at Chihango.

A year ago there were eighty children. Months ago there were one hundred forty. Now we have almost one hundred eighty. The government wants to reserve the right to continue sending us problem children whom no one else wants, and yes, we will take them if at all possible. Most of these children are either orphans or abandoned by parents unable to care for them. Such children are still all around, and we meet them and try to

befriend them each day. Heidi has been picking them up one by one and adding them to the Chihango family.

Heidi found Beatrice along the road a few months ago, covered with severe scabies from head to toe. She got her to a doctor for emergency treatment, and then brought her to Chihango. For a long time no one ever saw Beatrice smile, but now she is doing well, growing in the Lord...and smiling! Constance is a little girl at Chihango who was abandoned in back of one of the buildings when she was only two. She has been allowing Heidi to hold her in her arms, hug her and put her to sleep. She always used to run away from everyone. Now she follows Heidi everywhere, and we are praying that Jesus will fully heal Constance's heart and deliver her from her severely traumatic past. Just recently Heidi picked up a little boy who had just been abandoned along the roadside by his parents who live 120 miles away. He hadn't eaten in a long time. Heidi prayed and wept with him, fed him and brought him to Chihango. He is still emotionally numb, but he is with us and every day he is receiving more of the love of Jesus.

Right now there still isn't much to bring children to at Chihango. Their rooms are bare, picked clean by thieves. They sleep on the cement floor with no sheets, pillows or even mats. There is absolutely nothing in their rooms. They have no extra clothes other than those on their backs. They have had no possessions of any kind. Many of them need medical attention. Some are missing limbs from land mine explosions.

But this past Christmas we helped them celebrate Jesus' birthday for the first time. We gave them paper and crayons—their first—and they excitedly drew Christmas decorations. We brought little gifts for them from South Africa: marbles, balls, pencils, simple toys, etc., things which they had never seen and which meant so much to them. And we told them the marvelous story of that first Christmas when God out of His great love gave His only Son to the world.

When we are particularly stressed out by the frustrations of Africa and the difficulty of getting much done, it is an absolute joy to head for Chihango, load up the truck with a dozen or so children, and take them bouncing and laughing off to a local fishing village, through mud and rain or whatever, and just have great fun together with them. We need to take them to the beach, teach them sports, so many things. How great to have such a family!

We repaired Chihango's bakery and for several months were able to locate enough flour to bake bread for the children and almost pay for the flour by selling bread in local villages. But now an underground "mafia" has hoarded all the flour in the city in order to double the price, and we cannot bake bread any longer. And so as I write the children are down to meager rations and in danger of starving again.

25 January 1996

The most important thing to know about Chihango now is that in the middle of all their deprivation the children have joy, real and rich joy. This in turn brings joy to Heidi and me, and keeps us going. You would be so encouraged if you could watch these children praying at length with all their hearts, exalting Jesus and resisting the devil. We wish you could hear them sing through the day. There is life and hope here, and people are taking notice.

7 February 1996

Our Chihango family is growing. This week Heidi brought in three more abandoned children, ages three, four and six, all girls. None have a father, and they were left along the road by their mothers. Almost every week we get new children. Many are simply coming off the streets and showing up at Chihango. Apparently there has been no formal admission procedure, and now children just arrive. Perhaps they've been hearing about us and the changes here—we'll find out. And so the needs grow....

In this country it is our Chihango children who give us the most joy. They soak up the Holy Spirit like sponges, and each day are worshipping and seeking the Lord more fervently. The overall morale and atmosphere at Chihango have changed radically; the children are enthusiastic and full of hope. They march around singing and praising God even as they learn to clean up, pound nails, saw wood, paint walls and in general be “part of the answer.” They fully expect God to provide for them and their future, and we cannot abandon them.

We have our challenges. Recently we started our first formal Sunday service at our new church, called “Chihango Arco Iris”—referring in Portuguese to the hope we have in God’s promises as symbolized by the rainbow. Our corporate name is taken from ‘iris’, the Greek word for ‘rainbow’, which found its way into the Portuguese language. Last Sunday Heidi was driving to Chihango to preach, and the roads on the way were deep with mud from rain. At one point along a small cliff by a fishing village, the road had collapsed down onto the beach, and with it went a bus. Heidi went around the village, crossed the tidal flats through deep water, mud and sand using four-wheel-drive, and made it to Chihango an hour-and-a-half late. She found the children still eagerly waiting, and she preached her heart out to hungry hearts. Villagers and people from Maputo are coming from all around, hearing that “Jesus is at Chihango!”—a cry that truly blesses us beyond measure.

The mud from the rains has prevented sellers of firewood from getting to the village markets, so we now have no wood to burn in our bakery oven at Chihango. The government has been supplying a pittance for food, but they’ve stopped even that, so now the children are depending on us for daily sustenance. We, of course, have no more resources in ourselves. I was asked recently, “How can you have joy in a situation like that?” I thought to myself, “How can anyone have joy by looking the other direction?” We are actually filled with joy because the Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into

our hearts, and that is what it means to be alive. He will sustain us and the children because by His grace we are seeking first His Kingdom. As we have often said, we are not simply providing humanitarian aid. We are looking for the Kingdom of God among us, and want nothing less than for Jesus to dwell among us and reveal himself gloriously to the hurting and greatly disadvantaged. May Chihango bring glory to His Name!

Sometimes we look at ourselves and our relatively pitiful efforts and resources, and realize that we do seem like the “off-scouring of the world” to large and “proper” secular relief organizations. But we live by faith, knowing that God uses the foolish and lowly things of this world to confound the wise. We are glad to bear reproach if only we can learn and grow in His grace, please Him by our faith, and go on to be used by Him to produce much fruit that will last....

14 March 1996

Sumbane died yesterday of malaria, even after a two-hour cold shower to reduce his fever. We had no medicine and couldn't get him to the hospital fast enough. Eight years old, and one of our little orphans at Chihango, he knew Jesus and had been beautifully touched by the Spirit. Many prayers and tears flowed, but now he's in heaven where he can be so very happy. Our hearts are up there with him where Jesus is. What a great day it will be when we and all the children of Chihango can join him and stand before our Lord without spot or wrinkle, full of joy and righteousness.

Fifty other children have malaria at Chihango. Heavy rains have made the surrounding land swampy, mosquitoes are everywhere and the incidence of malaria is at a record high. The whole area needs to be sprayed. Our children are without nets or window screens, and we need to get them immediately, along with medication. We commit ourselves and our children into the hands of Jesus as we share our situation with you. Lord, we cry out to you for protection, solutions and healing power.

We know that our wonderful Lord knows each of these children intimately, and we trust Him all the more to be our rock and refuge. The children are pouring their hearts out to Him, knowing that He is their only hope. Two Sundays ago the Holy Spirit fell on the children in church, filling every single child, and every one began praying and worshiping in tongues. So did each of our visitors from the city and the surrounding villages. We may be ministering to unimportant, uneducated, lowly people, but Jesus came to them, and nothing more wonderful could happen. He showed them what He thought of them, that He loved them, and he revealed Himself to them. Holy Spirit, continue to come and blanket our children with your sweet, warm, comforting presence. Blow among us and bring grace like sweet, spring rain. We can taste and see that the Lord is good!

A little while ago we ran out of cash for food. The government had stopped helping altogether, and we were counting the days until we were broke: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.... On our last day a truck from the World Food Program unexpectedly made its way out to Chihango and dropped off a two-week supply! Jesus is so creative and worthy of praise. Now we face more challenges, but our faith has increased and will continue to increase as we fight the good fight.

Children continue to arrive. Not long ago a father brought his two-year-old son to us. The boy's mother had been shot in cold blood by bandits while holding him in her arms. The destitute father could only turn to us. The traumatized child screamed whenever he was put down. Again tears flowed and flowed, and we knew once more why we are in Africa.... We are the physical extension of God's heart, rescuing precious human beings from Satan's incredible cruelty.

Beatrice, our little girl that we found on the road covered head-to-toe with scabies, is losing her eyesight due to vitamin A deficiency. Many others are also affected. Jesus knows: a donor just bought us \$5,000 of vitamins that will be in our first container shipment. And a South Africa friend gave Heidi a large supply of vitamin A last week.

19 April 1996

We baptized almost two hundred children, including our own daughter Crystalyn, at Chihango on Easter morning. It was the climax of our work in Mozambique so far. What a great, beautiful day. After weeks of clouds, rain and mud, the dawn brought forth clear skies and welcome warmth from the sun. Our meeting room was clean and bright—laboriously scraped, scrubbed and painted by newly industrious children intent on honoring Jesus. Once dark and dingy, like the inner hearts of these children six months ago, the transformed “church” visibly expressed a new spirit of hope and lightness of heart at Chihango.

After a brief Easter family breakfast at our Chihango “house”—slowly being made livable and secure—we walked over to meet the children. Once severely malnourished and lethargic, and often fighting or crying, they now energetically dart around flashing their beautiful smiles. “Mama Heidi” and “Tia Rachel” are of course major attractions. The children gather around them and cling to them affectionately, especially the very young and recently abandoned. All the children were so excited. They had been anticipating this day for a long time. Beatrice, whom Rachel had found along the road almost dead from infections and going blind, was ready for her baptism—in good health. Other abandoned children, traumatized and emotionally numb for months, but who had been touched and filled with the Holy Spirit, now ran to the church service to worship again.

And so we began our Easter service. We sang fast, rhythmic African songs. We sang slow worshipful songs. We called out hungrily for the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. I preached an Easter message, emphasizing the unimaginably surprising and creative goodness of our God, our need to trust Him all the more through our troubles, and His desire to live among us as a foretaste of heaven. And then the children marched

out singing across the grass and through the trees of Chihango over to our “baptismal tank”—a small water cistern by our house.

For several hours we baptized children, and also adults from our surrounding community. One-by-one they climbed into the tank, many grinning broadly. We questioned them closely concerning their commitment to Jesus and carefully recorded their names. A band of local Christians sang and danced beside us the whole time. Each child went down into the water in death and up again in resurrection life. They laughed with joy. We clapped and praised the Lord. We prayed and interceded for each one, that our children would become spiritual pillars, leaders and preachers—and plain, humble servants of our King. Chihango never saw a day like this.

Afterward we joined the children for their lunch, by then two o’clock in the afternoon. Their bowls of food—fish on rice—are set out around the room, many on the floor. The children line up outside and file in to their places in a very orderly way. We all eat with our fingers. And we are all so grateful for what Jesus has done for us.

A month ago seventy-five children at Chihango were sick with malaria. Nearly every day someone was being rushed to the Maputo hospital, which has three times the patients it can handle and is often out of medicine. One day we had to take in ten children. As you know, a boy died of highly virulent falciparum malaria. Fine in the afternoon, by ten o’clock that night he was dead. We had a limited supply of chloroquine tablets, but they don’t do much. It looked like the malaria was out of control. We are so moved that friends have gotten together to raise money for a shipment of emergency medication from Europe. That is still on its way, delayed by the Easter holidays and high demand in other desperate areas.

In the meantime, what has happened? Sumbane died, bringing attention to the seriousness of our epidemic, and our own helplessness. Now Jesus has graciously demonstrated his power. The girls’ housemother was dying in the hospital with cerebral

malaria too, and the doctors were very afraid for her. But God had mercy on her and brought her back to health. She is absolutely thrilled to be alive and she gives all the credit to God. And on Easter she was baptized with all the children.... Others have come very close to dying, but they have all recovered. Yesterday I helped take one boy to the hospital; he was feverish and vomiting, but at the moment I believe he is our only malaria case. Not long ago the children would line up anxiously when we offered to pray for their many sicknesses, aches and ailments. They had vitamin A deficiency, scabies, and so many other problems. No one had given them any medical attention for years. But now very few of them need prayer for healing. Even those with damaged eyesight are recovering. These children are not shy with us. If anything was wrong, they would quickly let us know.

We are grateful to God that He has given the children a definite awareness of their relationship with Him. Typically in Africa and Third-World countries elsewhere, people surge forward repeatedly to the same altar calls. But at Chihango no one has felt a need to respond twice to an invitation to come to Jesus. We receive new children steadily, and they respond, but the others stay put, secure in their faith—a very good sign. They testify freely in our meetings of their appreciation for the Word of God and our teaching, and of their ongoing need to repent.

7 June 1996

Because of poverty, oppression and war, hundreds of children have been orphaned, abused and abandoned. Maputo is often seen as the promised land, where many “lost” children end up. We have been reaching out to these precious, abandoned children for many months. Our Chihango family is a place where there is hope for them.

Trust is not won easily on the streets. Words are cheap. These children watch, wait and consider if they want to be part of our family. Today was a happy day. Six more young lives were born into the kingdom! Augusto, Joan, Adriano, Mario, Alberto and

Guambe have become children of the living God. He will care for them and provide their bread, and fill the emptiness in their hearts. Perhaps slowly the pain of abandonment will fade as they are embraced by their new family, Chihango Arco-Íris!

Last week my daughter Crystaly and I were out buying bread, and in the street we came upon a motionless boy dressed in rags and covered with sores. We thought this precious child was dead. I walked over to him and laid my hands on his shoulder. He woke up and looked frightened. I gave him some bread and began to ask him his story. Everista could not talk very well. He had not spoken for a long time. He did not know how old he was. He had never been to school. He knew his parents were dead and he was alone and hungry. The other street children found him odd and had been kicking him around. His body bore the marks of years of abuse. His fingers were scarred from nervous chewing. He scurried along the ground more like an animal than a human being. I asked Everista if he wanted to come and live with us. I spoke of our large family at Chihango. His eyes brightened. I took him home and washed his wounds. Crystaly happily gave him some clothes and things to play with. We hugged him and prayed for him, and let him know he was loved.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of our savior in Isaiah 25:4: "You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat." And then in 32:2 Isaiah prophesies: "Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land." We are all called to participate in God's divine nature. We are called to be His shelter for the poor, a safe place from the spiritual, psychological and physical storms of this world. We are meant to be the heart of Jesus given for those in distress. We were created to be channels of the living water of the Holy Spirit poured out for those living in the desert. The 228 children in our family have found security and hope in the loving arms of their heavenly Father, who will never abandon them. They are

not numbers in an institution. They are children we call by name. Children who are loved. Great treasures in His kingdom! —Heidi G. Baker

8 August 1996

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

Chihango has changed. The orphaned and abandoned children here are tasting the goodness and favor of their heavenly Father. It is pure joy to bring the comfort of God himself to “the least of these....” We have a clear vision for our children, once beaten, abused and starved: that God might “bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor” (Isa. 61:3).

Silvery mist lies low over the grass and rolling fields of Chihango in the golden dawn light. A brightening rich blue sky is still the backdrop for diamonds dazzling in the heavens: a sharply-etched new moon, the intense morning star and the elegant company of lesser lights. A warm assortment of colors from the rising sun splash themselves around the horizon on delicate clouds, artfully left by recent storms. Soft sounds of life begin arriving from the simple country huts of neighboring villages. Smoke spirals up from wood fires on dirt courtyards here and there as the challenge of preparing food for another day begins.

The children are up early at Chihango. All the way from our house we can hear their shouts and see them scampering back and forth between the trees. I wonder how they slept, for the night was chilly and many are still without blankets on thin mats. But the day has begun magnificently. We seem so far away from war, from conflict and

disorder and all the evil legacy of Satan's work. May the peace of the Holy Spirit settle gently and sweetly on this land and these people.

I am about to take Elisha and Crystalyn to school in town, but first we must load up our truck with bread baked in the night at our own Chihango bakery. Several of our older boys will spend the day at the nearby fishing village selling the bread—a daily business that goes a long way toward making our bakery self-sufficient. On the way down the very rough country road we pick up whoever needs a ride to the market or to town—until we are bursting with bodies and even more are perched on the bumper and clinging to the roof....

It is spectacular to watch God work and be a part of what He is doing. Chihango has changed drastically for the better, and we can only wonder at how it happened.

This place was a dispirited, broken-down cesspool of hopelessness and human degradation. We had never seen nor heard of such a pitiful excuse for an orphanage or children's home. The former "directors" treated the children harshly, overworked them and drove many away. Completely callous and utterly ungodly, they stole freely from the government's budget for Chihango and took for themselves nearly all food and supplies that were designated for the children by relief agencies. Chihango was a shell of an institution, gutted by evil neglect with no one to help. We saw first-hand how the powerful few profit from the poverty and misery of the many. Knowing the determined generosity of foreigners, corrupt government officials here lie in wait and plot their thievery.

When I first saw Chihango in January of 1995, there were 80 children here. They were in filthy rags, almost starving. They were weak and sick. They were sullen and violent. There was hardly a light bulb in the whole place, a door that shut, or an unbroken window. Toilets were clogged. Plumbing was broken. There was no bedding at all. The staff literally camped out on cement floors, cooking over wood fires in the rooms and

defecating everywhere. The bakery oven had not been used in years. The kitchen was barren. I actually thought that all we could do was demolish the buildings and start over with a complete reconstruction project.

But no, God showed much more interest in the children than the buildings. Heidi came in August of 1995, Rachel came a month later, and together they struggled with Portuguese and government officials, but mostly they got close to the children of Chihango. It took months, but in time the children softened, they began to listen, and then they began to receive from Jesus. They cried in repentance, they learned to sing, dance and worship. They listened to the Word of God, and wanted more. At first everything we brought to Chihango was stolen, either by the children, the staff, the cooks, or the neighboring villagers. It was very hard. The children were taught emphatically that they could not expect God's favor and continue to fight and steal. They heard and became zealous, marching around the property anointing all the buildings with oil and calling out to God for protection and provision.

And then the children began to see God's hand of power, and they were awed, not diffident. At one point a large, three-month supply of food destined for Chihango simply disappeared, apparently stolen by officials. Our storeroom was literally down to four bottles of ketchup and some herb tea, and that was it! We did not have money ourselves to keep feeding so many children. Everyone prayed their hearts out, and the next day a truck unexpectedly arrived loaded with food from the United Nations World Food Program. Soon after that friends at the US Embassy directed the attention of the Mozambique WFP director to our situation, and an agreement was made to supply us directly with adequate maize and basic staples to feed the children in renewable three-month allotments! This has cut our expenditure for food down by one-third or so.

We now have about 230 children and also several dozen older boys in their teens and early twenties who grew up at Chihango and still have nowhere to go. So we are responsible for feeding around 250 a day. Now that the children have a radiant Christian

witness, we are taking them out onto the streets of Maputo each week where they enthusiastically share their faith and their experience at Chihango with the ragged, cold, lonely street crowd that they came from themselves. These children have marvelously effective credibility, and the street children are responding. And so we are adding to our Chihango family each week those who want to join us. But not all street children can make the transition to a large and bewildering social family like Chihango, nor do we have the staff to watch and attend to each child constantly. We need so much more help to handle this many children.

It is the change in the hearts and spirits of the children themselves that is most gratifying. They have repented in tears. They pray and worship from the heart, often long after our meetings are dismissed. Many pray in tongues and have felt the Holy Spirit's touch. They know they need the Lord more than anything material, but they don't hesitate to cry out for food and provision as well. They are much closer to each other, the older children comforting and caring for the younger. They laugh and play energetically, and in the barren simplicity of their existence they exhibit joy. They have hope again, and they know it is because Jesus has come to Chihango.

Our worship services have become real celebrations in the Spirit, mixed with earnest seeking. Last year these children knew nothing of church or Christian singing, but now they sing and dance with real African verve, and also love our slower and softer Western worship music. They have formed a number of their own little choir groups, and all through the week and even late at night their singing and rehearsals can be heard across the fields and through the trees of Chihango.

Months ago it became clear to me what has happened here when we returned from a supply trip to South Africa. It was dark, we were exhausted, and all we wanted to do was unload the truck and go to bed. But the children had heard our diesel engine, and in no time they appeared out of the night and massed around us. They were so affectionate, especially toward Heidi, who has been their "Mama" since last fall. Grinning and

laughing, and wanting to hug her and hold her hand, they began softly chanting, "Mama Aida, Mama Aida...." We truly have a family here.

7 March 2000

What has happened to Mozambique, this country where we live and work and have come to know so well, is almost unbelievable to us. What started off as a three-day rainstorm early this month has turned into a natural disaster that has required the largest humanitarian aid mobilization that Africa has ever seen. It is likely that tens of thousands of human corpses will be uncovered when the flood waters subside. Southern Mozambique is one huge flood plain draining the highlands of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and there was no escape for whole towns and villages, many still beyond the range of rescue helicopters.

Mothers struggling in neck-deep currents drowned their own babies in their back slings. Stranded communities are reduced to eating the decayed flesh of dead cows, and children are even roasting rats. Upper-story roofs in Xai-Xai have collapsed under the weight of so many desperate survivors. The stench in the streets from sewage and animal carcasses is terrible. Severe malnutrition is setting in among young children. Clean water is nearly impossible to find, even for rescue crews. Refugees have been seen urinating in and drinking out of the same pools of water. Malaria victims lie motionless in the dirt with high fevers. Twenty-six camps with almost no facilities or provisions are trying to care for 250,000 people.

Aid is pouring into Maputo's tiny airport finally, creating a logistical nightmare. Air traffic controllers have been flown in from England to handle the load. After weeks of delay, the government has expedited customs, but still the fine details of every shipment take hours and days for officials to write out without computers. Organizing and delivering goods to the camps, and then by air to still-stranded populations is overtaxing the capabilities of the world's largest disaster relief organizations. And still the cry is,

“Too little, too late.” There aren’t enough helicopters in all of Africa to handle the need. The worst is yet to come, as thirst, ravenous hunger and epidemics take their toll, even with the best efforts of dedicated aid professionals.

We have assumed responsibility for a second camp of 3,000 flood victims, this one north of Maputo near the severe flood waters. Today our staff went up there by arrangement with the government to pick up and bring to our center as many flood orphans as possible. To get there we have to wade through water waist-deep or more for an hour, take surface transport at exorbitant cost (fuel must be carried in on heads), wade for another hour, take another “capa” ride, and then wade again. Heidi kept falling into holes and mud, arriving totally drenched. Helicopters are bringing in survivors all through the day and landing them in three main areas south of Xai-Xai.

In the camps we find huge joy as thousands listen to the gospel and devour tracts even before they eat the bread we bring. We need truckloads of tracts and Bibles to satisfy such hunger. These flood victims, many weak and sick, and all without possessions, are thrilled to sit and learn about our Lord Jesus. They respond, they worship, they pray and weep in repentance for themselves and the sins of their nation. They sing and dance. They are thrilled when we send ministry teams. They need more than pallets of beans and rice. As the President’s secretary-general Senhor Matos told us, his people need love. They need comfort and warmth. They need to be hugged. They need assurance and faith. They need the Lord, and all that is in His heart.

Mozambique is still a land of paganism, witchcraft and ancestor worship among many. The head of the Renamo, the political party that narrowly lost a recent national election, declared that this disaster was the work of angry “spirits” taking revenge over a miscount of the votes. Syncretism, illiteracy and rural isolation are other obstacles to hearing the clear gospel. But in these camps people are gathered together from their far-flung villages and are eager and willing to listen to preaching, and to receive ministry in the Holy Spirit. May Jesus reign over this national calamity as only He can.

2 September 2000

Malawi stretches ahead, its hills rising seven thousand feet below us from the Zambezi River valley of Mozambique. Pure, dazzling cumulus clouds add grandeur to the fresh, clear air of the north, far from the smoky brush fires that have polluted the skies of Maputo around our center in the south. Heidi and I are squeezed into our Cessna light plane, sharing precious space with everything we need for a crusade in the bush: sound system, generator, tents, sleeping bags, lights, tools, lots of water. With worship music on in our headsets, we prepare our hearts.

We are excited, studying the huts passing below us and praying to understand the needs of yet another country and mission field. A peak ahead blocks normal radio transmission to Blantyre, so we use short-wave to reach Lilongwe and explain our intentions. What are we doing in Malawi, they want to know. We are holding a conference for almost one hundred of our churches in the unlikely town of Bangula in Malawi's southern tip, and we need to be there tonight.

I last visited Malawi in May, when we had eighteen churches that resulted from a two-day visit by our staff a year earlier. Now we have more than a hundred churches in this dusty, forgotten corner of the country where white missionaries are almost never seen. Thousands of believers are begging for this conference. They can hardly believe we will come this far to be with them. They are so excited. Many are walking for days from their villages to be with us. Even our leading pastors from Mozambique are enduring long, tortuous bus journeys over terrible roads to help us with this wildfire revival.

Fueled up at Blantyre, we head for Bangula, still sixty miles away. I know it only by its GPS coordinates. We drop over the hills down to a low plain, hot and shimmering in haze. I pick out rivers and landmarks I recognize from my chart. I hardly know what to expect. Silva, our lead pastor in Malawi, has been working for months getting the word out about these meetings. Is anyone coming? How will we take care of them?

Up comes a river that I know runs right by Bangula. A town materializes, but it is small and spread out. I see dirt roads and dry brush. And I see no runway where the map says it should be. I circle around. "Help me look, Heidi," I ask. "I don't see any kind of airport!" But there is a curious open field at the center of town, crisscrossed by footpaths. Surely that's not the airfield. There are cows all over it, and people wandering everywhere. Then I see the letters "B-A-N-G-U-L-A" dug in the dirt, obviously to be seen from the air, and a few markers at the corners of the field. A truck charges across the field, bouncing over the ruts through the crowds, and I recognize it as one of ours, driven up days earlier from Mozambique. I skim the ground to inspect the surface. There are holes, ditches and anthills, rocks and bushes, but I pick out a relatively safe line. Tanneken Fros, on our staff from Israel, is in the truck and waving energetically as we fly by her. This is the place. I go around. By now thousands of children are streaming across the field to watch us land. A few older guys are frantically waving them, and the cows, to the side with sticks. I coast in with full flaps and settle down as easily as possible on our oversize tires. The ground is rough and our plane shakes and vibrates to a stop in a cloud of dust. We are down and safe—and inundated with jumping, excited kids.

It's obvious that a plane hasn't landed here in years. This is an event! Everyone is staring. What have we brought? What is in that plane? We drag out our big speakers and heavy generator, and are mobbed by helpers. Somehow everything gets loaded into the truck, we find guards for the plane, and we are off to our first meeting.

It's not in a church, or even a building. One of our Christians has a field with a couple of mud huts. We get there by driving in and out of deep gullies along a dry river bed, trying to remember how to get back. There isn't much left of the town. Clearly the economy is dead. The countryside is gripped by drought. Dust blows down the street in swirls. People sit in the shade and stare without energy. The few shops are almost bare. All is in disrepair. But we find our "conference," a big band of ragged, dirt-poor country peasants who have been waiting for us all day. Tanneken has bought them sticks and

plastic tarp, which they have put up between the huts for shelter. They even nailed together some rough boards for a speaker's platform, with its own roof of tarp.

It's windy. The tarps are flapping and dust is blowing everywhere. A couple thousand people are trying to find bits of shade. We set up the generator way off in the bushes where it won't be heard, position our big speakers, hook up our heavy amp, and we have a sound system! What a rarity.

This gathering is the poorest we have seen yet in Africa. All come without food. None of the children have shoes. Obviously most have never received medical care. There are swollen, infected eyes and feet, and terrible scabs and sores everywhere. To feed them we buy big cooking pots and all the beans and maize available in town. Our ladies stir these pots over wood fires through the day, babies strapped to their backs. Water is carried on heads from a well in a nearby village. We buy straw mats for everyone to lie on at night, and they sleep with their colorful skirts wrapped tightly around themselves. There are no lights apart from the flashlights we brought. We dig our own pit latrines.

But we came to preach, and we poured our hearts out for three days. Is everyone hungry for Jesus? Do we want His presence and touch? Do we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Do we want to repent of all our evil and idolatry? Yes, yes, yes, yes!! What have we come here for? Nothing less than the love of God in Christ Jesus, who died for us! We'll never get love from a witch doctor. We'll never find enough in our families. We'll only find it in Jesus. If we have Him, we'll have everything!

We teach all we can from the Word of God in our short time together. The people flood forward in every meeting, kneeling in the dust and hot sun during the day, and in the dark at night. They want everything they can get. There is no resistance to the gospel. They know they are poor and helpless. This is their last chance, their only hope, and they know it. They are poor in spirit, and theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Their response grows. And then on the last day the floodgates of heaven are opened. Heidi preaches from the book of James on the practical realities of holiness, trying to condense a training program for pastors into one session. New churches are forming almost every day, and we must teach leaders quickly what they most need to know. Do they want the purity of God? Do they want to be washed by the blood? Do they want the power of the Holy Spirit? Do they want the wisdom of God to lead their people?

We pray for just the pastors first. They throw themselves down before God, oblivious of heat, wind and blowing dirt. A mighty cry of prayer goes up to heaven. Young and old weep together. Rivers of tears flow. Hands reach toward God. Many are shaking in their intensity, unaware of anyone else but Him. Lost in worship and desire, many are pouring their hearts out in tongues. We invite everyone to jump into the things of God, to come forward, join the pastors and seek Him. And then for hours our conference becomes something like a Day of Pentecost for Malawi. No one cares about time, appearance or comfort. Even children are hit with the fire of God. Waves of glory and gratitude roll over us all. The roar of prayer continues. Jesus is getting what He wants: extreme passion for Him!

This is what we came for, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit: visions, miracles, utter repentance and the richest love in the universe crashing down like a mighty, pounding cataract on the poor and abandoned of the world. May the fresh, cool, refreshing mist of this living waterfall be felt all over Africa and the world. May the brilliance of its perfection spread everywhere with thundering power. May the Holy Spirit roll like a tidal wave over the hopelessness of this entire continent, undoing Satan's worst.

How will we write down all the testimonies, the stories of all who were healed, who received revelation and heard the voice of the Good Shepherd? How can we share the best of what God has done here with all our friends around the world? How can we tell you that God is truly able to bestow on the destitute of remotest Africa "a crown of

beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Isaiah 61:3)?

Pastor Silva is thrilled. He is beside himself with joy. He can't stop saying over and over, "I'm so happy!" His people are not disappointed. The missionaries did come as promised, and so did the Holy Spirit. We have wildfire church growth in Mozambique, and now in Malawi too. How will we organize and supply next year's conference, which will be so much bigger? We don't know, but Jesus does, and we can hardly wait. Meanwhile we will keep trying to write down all that we see Him doing....

That night we show the Jesus Film at Bangula's "airport" for people who weren't at our conference. In the dark we tie a sheet to poles planted in the dirt, train our video projector on the sheet, turn up the sound, and suddenly have an audience of four thousand. They press in on us and struggle to get still closer. The gospel is clearly explained, and at the end all join in praying the sinner's prayer. Our churches around Bangula will grow. Jesus is wanted and appreciated, and He will make His home with them....

The next day we pack the airplane before another huge crowd. Everyone wants to touch our bird and run their fingers over our Holy Spirit dove on the tail. We have a mighty farewell prayer meeting with our pastors. We are all burning with fervor for the future of the Body of Christ in Malawi. We tow our plane by hand to the start of the field, warm up in another cloud of dust, and rev our way into the sky again, looking back just enough to see a host of waving hands. How excellent it is to serve the King, and to see His Kingdom come!

26 December 2000

When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Luke 14:12-14)

We gave a Christmas banquet at our Zimpeto center, and to us it was a foretaste of the King's great banquet given for us all on that Great Day. We called in beggars from the streets, the destitute from the dump, prostitutes from the brothels, drug addicts and gangsters, and they all sat down together with our children, missionaries and Mozambican staff.

Cooks worked all day on our chicken dinner, something we have only two or three times a year. Heidi shopped for days in South Africa, getting dolls, marbles, balls, toy cars and stuffed animals to add to all that was sent to us from around the world. Volunteers wrapped presents for weeks. We gave donated pants and shirts to the dump children, and a week earlier we brought wraparound skirts to the prostitutes so they would have something to wear for Christmas with us.

All of us, almost two thousand, sang and danced before the Lord. More came to Jesus, kneeling before the King who came, simple and poor, to identify with us. We began with a beautiful wedding for a couple who hadn't been able to get married before because the groom's house was washed away in the flood. He is one of our pastors, and has been living in the corner of a friend's grass hut, but now we've built him and his new bride a new reed house. We are abounding in good fruit, such as prostitutes coming to Jesus who want their children back from our house for abandoned and HIV babies.

One ex-prostitute married Zacharias, a young man Heidi found on the streets three years ago. Jesus changed Zacharias from a mean, violent street fighter into a radiant man of God who now pastors one of our downtown Maputo churches. This church meets in a broken-down old building which gets filled up with street girls, abandoned children, drunks—all finding hope and powerful help in our good God! It has grown so much that we have built an extension and are looking for more old buildings in Maputo to convert into ministry centers.

Now we are caring for a thousand children, and have a thousand pastors serving in churches all across Mozambique and into South Africa and Malawi. These churches

are themselves learning to take in orphans and abandoned children, like a little girl in Chimoio whose father was killed by a land mine and mother was eaten by a lion. Masses of utterly destitute people across the country of Mozambique are finding the ultimate gift this Christmas—Jesus Himself. He continues to heal the sick, raise the dead and reveal Himself to the poorest of the poor, and all who want Him desperately. Here are a few examples. Jitu, an HIV-positive street boy who came to us last year, is now HIV-negative—our first HIV miracle! Jesus used Surpresa Sithole, one of our leading evangelists, to raise up Shansha, a six-year-old girl who was dead of malaria for over a day. And Joel came into our office to tell us what Jesus did for him. His father was killed in the war, and his mother died of cerebral malaria. We found him hungry and beat up on the streets, and took him in. Recently he also got malaria, but in the night a tall, shining angel touched him and placed a Bible in his hands. He was healed immediately and now is full of love and gratitude to Jesus, always ready to testify.

Our last three months have been the most intense ever. Moslem government officials are trying to deny us visas and get us expelled from Mozambique. Corrupt bureaucrats have falsified our corporate documents and put our whole ministry in serious jeopardy in order to extract gain from us. Contractors have stolen from us. Daily there is continuous pressure on us to provide for every kind of desperate personal need. We are concerned for hundreds of thousands of people in our churches across the country, some of whom are walking for days through the bush to get a bite to eat.

28 February 2001

The rivers of central Mozambique continue to rise, cutting many thousands of our own church members off from food supplies and medical help. Upstream dams are being opened up to prevent them from overflowing and breaking. The rains continue, and now again Mozambique's government is helpless without international assistance.

Challenges to our faith in Jesus do not stop. Last week, even as we received daily reports of desperation from the flooded north, a terrible outbreak of cholera hit our center at Zimpeto near the capital city of Maputo. We now think the cholera was introduced by contaminated food brought in to a wedding in our church. The disease is wildly contagious, and within days we had taken seventy children, pastors and workers to a special cholera hospital in town. This is actually a big tent, strictly quarantined, filled with “cholera tables,” bare wood beds with a hole in each and buckets underneath for nonstop diarrhea and vomiting. Every patient was on a IV drip.

Many have died in this emergency hospital. Maputo’s health officials were terrified of a city-wide epidemic. Maputo’s Director of Health put her finger in Heidi’s face and told her, “You will be responsible for killing half of Maputo!” Every day health officials came to our center, desperately trying to identify the source of the cholera and contain its spread. Soon the city police were involved, intent on shutting down our entire center and ministry. For days nothing seemed to help. We were washing and disinfecting everything. Our trucks were making hospital runs day and night. Our own clinic was filled with children on IVs. Our staff was completely exhausted.

Only Heidi was allowed to visit the tent hospital. Every day she would go in and spend hours and hours with our kids, holding them, soaking them in prayer, declaring that they would live and not die. They vomited on her, covered her with filth, and slowly grew weaker. Many were on the edge of death, their eyes sunken and rolling back. The doctors were shocked by her lack of concern for herself, and were certain she would die along with many of our children.

Our stress level was the highest ever. We remembered how we had been evicted from our first center in early 1997, and we just couldn’t take that again. We had been preaching salvation and deliverance with all our hearts to these children we had rescued out of the streets and dump, and now they were slipping away right in front of us. Twenty of our pastors from the north were also in the tent and dying. Some of our weaker pastors

desperately wanted to go home, certain that they would all die if they stayed with us. Heidi and I were ready yet again to quit if God did not do something.

But during all of this the Holy Spirit kept falling on our meetings. Again and again all visitors would come to Jesus and hungrily drink in His presence. A strong spirit of intercession came over our stronger pastors, who would pray all hours, not only for our cholera victims, but for the suffering of the whole nation. Intercessory prayer groups in the U.S. and Canada, and around the world began to pray intensely for us.

Three days ago our entire future in Mozambique was in question. No one had any more answers. Our weakness was complete. Then some of our children began coming home from the hospital, even as others were being taken there. And then there were no more new cases. Extraordinary. And then yesterday everyone was home! Just like that, the cholera is gone. And Heidi is fine.

The doctors and nurses at the hospital are in a state of shock and wonder. The Director of Health again put a finger in Heidi's face: "You! This is God! The only reason you got through this was God! You and dozens of these children should be dead!" Eight of the medical staff there want to work with us now. "This is miraculous! You know God! We've never seen God do anything like this. We've never seen such love! We don't want to work here anymore. We want to work with you!" And so they will.

Several visitors to our center who came down with cholera did die after returning to their huts and refusing to go to the hospital. And we heard that one of our pastors had died, but that report turned out to be mistaken. We did not lose a single person who lives with us at Zimpeto.

So in a matter of days our worst crisis ever has turned into a wave of peace and joy at our center. Last night we worshiped to all hours, beholding His beauty in our hearts and enjoying His company. Our pastors and children are laughing and filled with excitement. What about the flooding up north? What about our thousands who are sick and haven't eaten in weeks? We don't know what exactly Jesus is going to do through us

yet, but our faith level has grown to new heights. May we trust Him always, and see Him glorified with our own eyes as we walk with Him even in the valley of the shadow of death. May you be encouraged too, and join us in serving the King!

3 May 2001

The East is glowing. Resurrection glory is painting itself steadily and irresistibly across the Mozambican sky. Dark, gray layers of cloud low over the sea yield one after another to color and warmth, and then pure, fresh brightness. The air is still. The fields are wet and glistening with dew. Morning is here, and I am ready to fly.

My Cessna 206 is packed with heavy sound equipment, bush supplies and a generator. I have my worship CDs for the flight, and my breakfast of local cashew nuts. I taxi past the sleeping terminal and lonely ramp out to the runway—the only traffic to hold the controller's attention. The takeoff is smooth and I bank slightly to set course for my goal, Marromeu, six hundred miles to the north on the mighty Zambezi River. There the poor will hear the Good News this Easter Sunday!

Wild African splendor opens before me as I cruise at nine thousand feet. The dawn spreads across the landscape with golden richness. Lakes, rivers and wetlands reflect the first flashes of direct sunlight. I am in my own prayer cathedral in the heavens, set apart with Jesus, bringing all my thoughts to bear on revival in this most unlikely land.

I spot isolated huts and villages along the way, connected by winding footpaths over great distances. This vast country looks nearly deserted from the air, yet more than ten million Mozambicans live out in the countryside in extreme poverty. Without communication and transportation, their simple, isolated lifestyle continues on, nearly oblivious to the outside world. And in their helplessness they suffer—from war, disease, drought, floods and famine. Apart from the gospel, they can only turn to their pagan traditions and witch doctors for relief, encountering endless deceit and oppression.

Can the Christianity of the West penetrate the far corners of even this incomprehensibly poor country? Can our conferences and conventions back home, set in carpeted, air-conditioned churches, reach into the Mozambicans' world of dirt, rags, starvation, malaria and frequent death? Can we with our supermarkets and fast food know what to say to a villager with only muddy water to drink and a handful of hard maize to feed his family for a week? In our world we preach to people who can fly and drive to attend our seminars, eat at fine restaurants after our meetings, and sink safely into sheets and real beds in clean, dry hotels late at night when we are finished. In Mozambique we face people who struggle for hours and days through waist-deep mud to hear us, carrying their hungry, dying children on their backs and sleeping on the bare ground night after night.

I fly on, building myself up in Jesus, daring to confront poverty's bleakest devastation only because He lives. I am incredibly grateful for these hours alone with Him, a gift from His heart. I pass the Save River, which divides Mozambique politically, the northern side dominated by the opposition party. In the desperation of such poverty, tension and violence are always just below the surface, and some talk constantly of more war. The coastline along the Indian Ocean appears in the distance to the east, and I begin my descent into Beira, Mozambique's second largest port.

Safely on the ramp at Beira's terminal, I pick up two pastors along with more equipment. Now our plane is at maximum gross weight, and we lift off and fly at low level the remaining one hundred miles to the Zambezi. Flood waters begin to appear, and we can see in detail the huts and maize fields under water or buried in mud. The one dirt road to Marromeu is an ordeal to traverse by truck, but at five hundred feet overhead, just under the clouds, we progress unhindered.

Marromeu's sugar mill is the first sign of the town on the horizon. The mill was sabotaged over ten years ago by rebels, contributing further to the region's poverty. The airport gradually comes into view, its two grass runways just out of the water but still wet

and soft. One runway is still filled with land mines from the war and is covered over by weeds. We settle toward the other after circling the town several times to announce our presence. On final approach we float in over the river and touch down right at its flooded edge. Even as we roll out bouncing over rough ground we can see people streaming out to greet us from under trees and behind huts. They are clapping and cheering all around.

We manage to turn around and taxi back across ditches and mud to a shack representing the government's presence at the field. Now hundreds are packed around our plane, overjoyed to see us again. I was up here a week ago and promised I would be back. The word got out, and on the strength of that indefinite hope pastors have walked into town from all around. Some have been waiting for days for us to show up. Without food, extra clothes or anything else, they just sit in the dirt, day and night, and wait.

Our friend Charlie from Jesus Alive Ministries is here with his Land Rover, driven tortuously through mud and water from Caia and its tar runway, fifty miles away, where the truck was flown in by JAM's large transport plane. Jesus Alive has tons of emergency food for our pastors to distribute, but getting it to Marromeu and other needy areas is an extremely slow and difficult process. So challenging are the conditions that the United Nations has given up trying to distribute anything beyond their emergency accommodation centers, leaving tens of thousands of people without food, many of whom are in our churches.

Darryl Greig, on our staff in Beira helping Tanneken, is with Charlie, and together we all get our stuff moved into town. There is one broken-down, old hotel. Its plumbing stopped working years ago. All is chipped, faded, musty and shabby. The rooms are hot, without fans and filled with mosquitoes. But we are grateful not to be out in tents, where we have been before. The big news that has the whole town stirring is our upcoming meetings. We promise to begin by showing the Jesus Film tonight. Eager hands help string a king-size sheet between posts on a tin-roofed platform in the town square. All the wires are connected and the system is tested. We are ready.

We learn that thousands have been added in the last few weeks to our twenty-seven churches in the Marromeu district. People everywhere are hearing about the blind and deaf lady who was healed on our first day at Marromeu, other healings, and our food distribution. "This is a church that loves!" the people say, just the reputation we want. But I am sobered and in tears too. We only brought a couple of bags of beans that first trip, and then Jesus Alive was able to make one flight into Marromeu for us with a small load of milled cornmeal. There was only enough for a few meals among all our churches. Yet our pastors wept with emotion. "Jesus did not forget us!" they cried. And for days they sang and praised God with thanksgiving.

Last week we brought a planeload of medicine for the local hospital, and our nurse, Pauline Couch, held a clinic at our main church in town, a mud-and-stick structure with a dirt floor, bent branches for pews, and a tin roof full of holes. And we preached, as always. All gathered at the simple mud altar, pastors in their threadbare best, mothers in their bright skirts with their nursing babies, and barefoot children in ragged t-shirts and shorts. No one moved, no one left, no one talked. The whole church soaked in silence and stillness before the King, not wanting to leave His presence. But we had to go, and now we are back, asking Jesus to touch yet again this poor, tiny town for His glory.

Nightfall comes and crowds pour into the square. Thousands missed the last showing and are determined to see it this time. One man runs up to Tanneken even before we start and says, "I am convicted of sin! How do I get saved?" She prays with him. All are riveted throughout the film. Rego, who has raised the dead, preaches with fire. All want Jesus. We stay another day. Monday night we hold a crusade meeting in the same square. I preach on "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is here!" just as Jesus did when He traveled from town to town. The people know something of God's power and goodness, but will they make Him their King? The entire crowd goes to its knees, crying out to make Jesus the King of Marromeu. There in the dark and on the wet grass, hearts bow before Him. Even the town chief wants prayer and a Bible. No one believes anyone but

the Savior can run their lives and lead them in truth. There is no path into His heart but repentance.

We stay another evening with our pastors and their wives, pouring our hearts out to them and listening to their testimonies. There has been a general heaviness over the people, due I think to suffering decades of war, deprivation and hunger under the heel of Satan. We will keep pursuing our God together with them until the joy of the Lord overcomes the mood of the land altogether, and as He accomplishes in our hearts what only He can do.

During our days we distribute food, a heart-rending job that takes supernatural wisdom. We must divide the food we have among everyone in the town, and the hospital and the prison, as well as our pastors and their churches. But no one fights. Everyone waits patiently for their sack which they will carry on their shoulders for hours and days back to their people. Their fields are deep mud. They have no seed to plant again. When will they eat again? What will they do? Their children have malaria and are growing thin before their eyes. They have no doctors, no medical insurance, no food stamps. They don't have the most basic necessities, like toothbrushes and underwear. They don't even have candles to light their huts at night.

They do not complain. We preach to them with fear and trembling, knowing that our words are a matter of life and death. We commit them into the hands of our faithful God, shaking with emotion over the cruelty of Satan, and even more over the glory that Jesus is revealing through their faith. How can the Western church relate to these people? We must, because we are part of the same Body.

“There is nothing I can do!” “I have enough trouble of my own!” Over and over again I hear the same things. But we are called to live by faith and not shrink back. We are not called to wait until we raise enough money. We are not called just to visit the mission field for a few weeks and test the waters. We are called to throw our entire lives

away on Jesus. We are called to hear His voice and follow Him. How can there be any greater thrill in serving God than to exercise our faith on behalf of the poor and suffering?

We will return to the Zambezi soon, pressing on for yet more revival. But now I am back in Maputo with our hundreds of orphaned and abandoned children at our Zimpeto center. As I see them laughing, playing and dancing, all calling me “Papa,” I remember how I first stood here alone in January of 1995 and accepted an old, terribly neglected children’s center that no one wanted, not the government, not any aid organization, no one. It had eighty sullen children who were diseased, starving and tormented by evil spirits. Heidi and I had no support for this. We had nothing but Jesus, and He has been enough. He will always be enough.

Today Mozambique, Africa and the world are filled with hungry, hurting people. They are lost. Their eyes are vacant and staring. Do you see them? Can you feel what Jesus feels? Do you have His vision? “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2).

5 November 2001

Night is falling. Towering rain clouds threaten across the horizon ahead. Lilongwe has been reporting an intense downpour all afternoon. Our pastors have been waiting for us there, patiently and eagerly, for days. We’ve been promising them a conference all year, and we keep getting delayed, but we are finally on our way.

I keep heading north in our Cessna 206 at nine thousand feet, two hours out of Beira on the Mozambican coast. Dark bands overhead streaked by the storm shroud a full moon breaking through a few seconds at a time. The night deepens. All is black below but rings of bush fires out of control in the wild. We are out of radio range. We share the sky with no other aircraft for hundreds of miles.

Beside me is Surprise Sithole, our Mozambican national director. Son of a witch doctor, the Holy Spirit called him with an audible voice out of his father's house and turned him into a flaming evangelist for Jesus, the all-powerful King. Worship CDs play in our headsets as we let our hearts fly to heaven to be with Him. Because He died and rose again, we keep going, we keep preaching, we do not tire. We cannot disappoint these pastors in Malawi. The revival will go on. Surprise and I listen, worship, pray and speak together of the great harvest all around us. Lead us on, Jesus, and through us spread everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of you....

The dim glow of Tete grows ahead. Slowly the small town drifts by beneath us, its pocket of lights divided invisibly by the Zambezi River, and the vast African bush awaits us again in the void ahead. Rocky peaks jut upward at us only a few thousand feet below. We reach the Malawi border and finally raise a human voice, approach control at Malawi's international airport. It is closed already, but they will keep the runway lights on for us. Blackness sweeps past us again and again as we sink down through what is left of the day's thunderstorms.

By now the heavy rain has passed, and Lilongwe's lights spread below us in the haze and mist. I just make out the runway lights and choose an easy visual approach. We taxi to the terminal, the only plane at the airport. Malawi's economy is down, air travel is down, and we begin to feel the oppressive weight of poverty.

Our pastors have no telephones and no transportation. They've been sitting at the airport since seven this morning, but we were delayed so they had to walk hours back into town. We find our own ride and hotel, and the next morning Surprise and I head back to the airport twenty miles north. Along the road we spot a group of men trudging along wearing blue hats—our Iris Ministries caps! We find our lead pastors, exhausted. They are overjoyed to see us. And they are starved. We find a minibus to rent at the airport and go shopping for beans, maize and sugar, enough to feed for days all our pastors and their wives and children who have come to hear us.

We meet first at the district pastor's house, a hut blackened with soot in a muddy slum. The women start their wood fires under pots in the courtyard as rain begins to fall. But everyone is thrilled. Jesus has not forgotten them! Today they will hear from the missionaries. Today we are together. Today the Holy Spirit will touch them again. Everyone is laughing and hugging, and we pray together, loudly and earnestly.

Tonight we will have a conference for our pastors and local people. But where? On a soccer field? In a town square? In a big church or rented building? No. Toward evening we pack everyone we can into our minibus, wives, kids, nursing babies, and then our generator and sound equipment. The pastors point the way. We leave the city lights. The road becomes dirt and gets rough. We struggle and slide through deep mud. We cross narrow, shaky wooden bridges. A half hour goes by. We are nowhere close. The night is very dark. We bounce and lurch over ditches and ruts. We keep making turns, trying to follow bush tracks, and I am completely lost. Where are we going? "To our church!" I am told. "It is just here!"

Eventually we arrive. It's a village, without a single light. We step off into the mud. All is quiet. My flashlight quits almost immediately, and I use my tiny spare. The pastors are excited. "Come see our church!" We stumble through brush and muck a hundred yards and there it is, a shadowy outline lit just faintly by what's left of a full moon's light through the patchy overcast. We are led inside. The walls are mud brick. We hear water dripping everywhere from holes in the thatched roof. The misshapen windows are eroded by all the rain. There are no chairs, benches, platform or pulpit—just dirt. A few hundred people could stand in here. "And here's the office!" they proudly announce. There's a wall, and one other room, about four by fifteen feet. Standing in it, I see nothing but more puddles and mud.

We have come to a center of revival. But this is not what we expect back home. We look for banners, choirs, radio announcements, stadiums, huge crowds, badges, CDs and books. But instead we are among the poorest of the poor at the ends of the earth. Yet

in this dark, pitiful little village the people feel like they are almost in heaven. We are about to have a conference!

The rain stops. We find a few chairs in nearby huts and set them outside in a field by the church. And there we start to worship, hardly able to see each other's faces. Our pastors sing their hearts out, and as villagers hear, they begin to appear out of the night and sit around us on the ground. We pay no attention to where we are. We just celebrate Him. Local believers enthusiastically gather in groups to give us songs, weaving together their unique African rhythms and harmonies. We all pray. Our revival leaders are shaking and crying with intensity. The sound of intercession, love and desperate hunger for more of Jesus rises to heaven from this most unlikely spot in the African countryside.

I start preaching, with fear and trembling. These people are hungry and barefoot. They've worn the same rags for a year. Even if they find seed to plant, there will be no harvest until next May. Prices for what little remaining food there is in the street stalls have doubled and tripled, and no one can pay. It's late, dark and cold. I have to speak for Jesus. "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). But I start with, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" (Romans 8:35). I have preached that before, but not where it had to be proven like this.

The pastors and their people do not complain. They have not come to beg from me. They are thrilled with the Lord and His promises. They have come for His presence. We keep praying, and He keeps coming. I am seeing the face of revival. This is what it really looks like. Standing in the refuse of the worst Satan can do, we watch the Savior and Redeemer conquer hearts and pour out righteousness, peace and joy. The ladies of the village, lined and wrinkled by a lifetime of hard labor, jump and shout with emotion. The elders weep in repentance. Some are on their knees and faces, even in the mud. Corruption and spiritual perversion have held the African church low, but we cry for

purity and passion. Then we can ask our Father in heaven for anything, including multiplication of food.

When can we come back? Everyone wants to be taught. Can we go to the east bank across the river? They have nothing there, and no one ever visits them. And Bangula? The dirt airstrip there is getting worse, overgrown with tall weeds and crisscrossed with paths and ditches, but can we try? We have hundreds of new churches in that area, all needing trained pastors. And also to the northwest, and over here and way over there.... How many conferences can we do in December?

Southern Malawi is in famine from this year's crop failure. Farmers are dropping along the roadside, searching for edible food. Their families have been eating unripe berries, tree leaves and grass. Weeks ago we bought up all the food we could find in warehouses with thousands of dollars of cash, and distributed it as far as we could. The government promises to buy food from South Africa, but when, and at what prices? No relief agencies are on the scene. Even during last year's disastrous flooding, the World Food Program was unable to deliver food to remote villages. No, Jesus is bringing the cry of this need specifically to our attention. These people are nearly all in our churches, which have mostly sprung up in the past year. The gospel has spread like wildfire, and now the test has come. Is Jesus still good news? We make plans to return soon for a major gathering of pastors, and we are expected to lead them on spiritually through yet another humanitarian disaster.

Why does our faith keep getting so tested? How much suffering and overwhelming need can there be in the world? How can the church, even the Western church, take care of it all? But we will not shrink back. We have an infinite Savior, and because He died for us, there will always be enough for those who receive His blood and flesh. He will glorify Himself in the world. He will do it in the darkest and most impossible of situations, and we will be carriers of His glory.

Now our churches number over 3,000 in Mozambique and neighboring countries. We are getting urgent calls from leaders in Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda who want to join this revival. They are crying for help. Our Bible school at our children's center in Maputo continues with four sessions a year, but now we need more Bible schools all over southeastern Africa. Pastors are desperate to learn the Word of God and grow in the Holy Spirit. Our last class just graduated a few weeks ago, and again as we clothed our students with prayer and ordained them for service, they were overwhelmed by the Spirit. Again they testified of all that God had done for them. One was raised from the dead after dying in the night right in our dormitory of a serious illness. While out of the body, Jesus met him and sent him back to finish his work on earth.

We can't build more huge centers for all the hundreds of thousands of AIDS orphans in Mozambique, but our bush churches all over the country are starting to take in orphans themselves and building simple mud and stick housing for them. That way the pastors and churches learn even more passion and compassion, and together they are God's miraculous response to a hopeless situation.

14 January 2002

Lino is intense. His eyes are wide and lit up, his hands are waving and gesturing. He turns and shifts excitedly. He can't be quieted. He knows what he's talking about, and he sounds like it. He speaks with authority, and I am listening, taking down every detail. I hit him with every question I can think of, and he answers me transparently, effortlessly. He has been raised from the dead, and I want to know all about it.

Pastor Lino Andrade is one of our more than one thousand pastors in Mozambique. His mud hut church is in the town of Gondola in the central province of Manica, not far from Chimoio where we have had major conferences. He has just begun a three-month Bible school term with us at our Zimpeto center in southern Mozambique.

Today he testified in church, and now I am with him face-to-face, getting every bit of information I can.

This morning he declared earnestly to all our children, staff and Bible school students that life after death is real, the supernatural world is real, angels are real, and the power of Jesus is real. He should know. He is one of about ten people in our churches who have been brought from death back to life by the Author of life, and we want to tell everyone!

Lino is a widower, and he stays with his daughter in her little house in Gondola. Not long before coming down for Bible school, he got seriously sick. He couldn't eat or sleep. He was in great pain. Too poor for medical attention, he didn't know what was wrong. Over the course of a month he kept deteriorating until he died. Instead of burying him, his daughter called for Pastor Joni, also in Gondola, who came with four other church leaders to pray. For three hours Lino's eyes were rolled back into his head, and his body began to smell of decay. But Jesus has used Joni to raise the dead before, and Joni was determined.

Lino was released from his body and given a vision of what might be. He watched his own funeral procession, and could see others lowering his own casket into the ground. He watched them put flowers on his grave. Two bright angels with wings came to him. He was shown things that have not yet been explained to him. But in the vision Lino refused to accept his own death. And then he heard God tell him that he was not going to heaven yet, but that he had many more years to live. In his spirit he could hear Joni praying loudly and fervently.

After a few hours he returned to his body and awoke in bed, but was very weak and nauseous from his own smell. Satan did not get his way, and Lino was not buried. Lino gradually got his strength back and his body normalized as everyone around looked after him. His church and all who knew him are incredibly encouraged. Lino himself is now strong and bold, always eager to minister.

Lino is an example of what happens when the poor, sick and desperate get close to Jesus. They want Him. They know they need Him, all the time and in every way. And if He can raise the dead, He can certainly take care of hunger, poverty and every other problem and affliction. We didn't come to Africa just to feed some children and give out a few clothes. We came to bring the wretched and forgotten close to Him, in the worst of circumstances. And we came to see what He can do when He draws close to them in return. Everything changes. All things are possible. The Word is true. Our Jesus can save to the uttermost. And all of us, all over the world, have hope who trust in Him.

Jesus has encouraged us in many ways recently. One lady's lungs were completely restored after she nearly died of advanced pneumonia. A man living in a shack near the dump, paralyzed from the waist down for two years, immediately rose to his feet and walked after baptism and prayer. A lady who for twenty-one years was totally blind in one eye and very blurry in the other can see clearly out of both. So many wanted to testify last Sunday in church along with Pastor Lino that we had to ask them to stop and continue later. Two young men from the dump are now in our Bible school. Many of our pastors are receiving visions. One of our strongest preachers is Chico, a fourteen-year-old child-pastor up north who leads many to Jesus at evangelistic meetings for children. We are very excited about our primary school for our orphaned and abandoned children. Jesus has given us very dedicated Mozambican teachers, and they have poured their energy and hearts into these most disadvantaged of students. Our facilities are so bare and basic, and the government has in the past given us such a hard time. Our fifth and seventh grade classes had to take national exams, and ninety-five percent of our students passed, giving our school the highest score in the country. Average is seventy percent. Jesus loves to take "the least of the these" and bring them to the head!

14 August 2002

Surpresa Sithole, our Mozambican national director, seems incapable of a negative thought. Brimming over with the Holy Spirit, he grins broadly and laughs easily in all circumstances. He is my constant companion in the bush, and we go everywhere preaching together. Jesus supernaturally called him away from his village witch doctor parents and has made him a powerful leader among our churches.

But for a moment today he is more serious. He is on the phone from South Africa, and again we face a test of faith. Simon Ndubani, one of our strongest pastors and a member of our leadership commission in South Africa, is sick. Actually, he is almost dead. Starting with coughing and diarrhea, he's been declining for a year, but without money for a doctor has not been diagnosed. People suggest that he has advanced stomach cancer, or AIDS—but he's been tested HIV-negative. Normally a very big man, he is a shrunken shell of what he once was. In the last three days he has deteriorated precipitously. He is in great pain. He cannot eat. He cannot walk. Today he cannot even move or turn over in bed. His vision is blurry, and in the last few hours he lost his speech and hearing.

It's hard to understand, but Simon has been one of our most gifted preachers, and has shown great faith. Jesus has used him to heal the blind and crippled instantly. Many desperate people in his church have come to him for prayer, and have been delivered. He is known as a great man of God. But now he is at death's door, destitute and helpless. He has no money, insurance or health benefits. His family is without transportation. His wife is sobbing and at her end.

This is really terrible news. What of God's reputation? How will our churches handle such discouragement? What will we say? Surpresa and I pray over the phone, and we keep praying, along with many others. Surpresa drives Simon to a hospital and carries his thin, bony body to his room. Simon is in a coma, and still Surpresa has to carry him to

the toilet every ten minutes. It is such a mess. The doctor expects Simon to die tonight. If he lives three days, it will be a miracle. Simon's wife is so afraid and distraught she will not even come into the hospital to see him.

Surpresa, Heidi and I have major conference meetings coming up in a few days in Mozambique. We have to speak the Good News to thousands of sick and destitute people without any hope but Jesus. We cannot defend the Lord's reputation. We will just keep loving Him. Simon is yours, Jesus. You be his God and doctor. We are yours, and we will keep living for you.

And so through the night and the next day we keep praying for Simon—and preparing for our meetings in Maputo and up north. Another night comes, and Simon is still barely alive. On we go. There is no direction but up, into His heart. Saturday comes, and Surpresa is expected to open our regional conference for our southern provinces tonight. But he is still at the hospital with Simon. I call him again, fighting the good fight of faith, because he needs to drive right away to Mozambique.

Surpresa responds with majestic understatement. "Well, it seems like a great miracle has taken place. I've been sitting here with Simon this morning, and we've been talking and laughing for hours. In fact, Simon doesn't remember going to the hospital or even why he is here! He is fine. The doctors will give him some extra blood, do a few tests, and send him home...."

Surpresa leaves Simon money for food and transport, and heads off to Maputo where we have a terrific meeting. Days later we hear by phone that Simon is one hundred percent and doing all that he used to do.... Jesus has the last say!

Our last two months have been a nonstop series of meetings all over Mozambique, in Malawi and in the States. Partners in Harvest/Iris Africa has grown to well over 4,000 churches spread into ten countries. The spiritual hunger, physical needs and demand for ministry we encounter are indescribable. Daily and weekly we receive

desperate calls for yet more bush conferences in hundreds of locations we have not yet been able to visit ourselves. The nets are breaking, there are so many fish.

These conferences typically involve gathering thousands of our people from village churches all around to a central location. All are destitute, so we must provide food and transport for everyone. We meet in an open field, or maybe under trees. We build a rough wooden platform. We bring lights, sound equipment and a generator in our airplane. We spread plastic sheeting over stick frameworks to shelter the women and children from the hot sun. We haul in water, pots, firewood and bags of maize, which we pound and cook all day. In areas of famine this will be the only good food many have eaten in weeks, or even months. The people come with nothing but their one set of ragged clothes. They sleep on grass mats or in the dirt, wrapped only in their cloth skirts. They come with their diseases, sores and infections, and the ravages of malnutrition.

They come because they want to meet Jesus. They want to be touched by Him. They want to be saved from their oppression and misery. They know there is no one else. And as they encounter the goodness of God, they repent and learn to worship Him. Our altar calls often become a mass of people crying out, sobbing and shaking in the hot sun, wind and dust as the Holy Spirit graciously and powerfully moves on them. Jesus is the Deliverer of Africa. He will make a new creation out of each desperate, lost, lonely soul in the remote bush who wants Him....

We bring in anointed guest speakers and visitors from all over the world, and they add their own gifts and emphases to our meetings. They serve beautifully and humbly in every way, large and small. They give their hearts, and receive all the more. We are all broken by the enormity of the damage Satan has done. But in this move of God we find ourselves carried again each morning by His Spirit, ready to endure, learn and be gathered mercifully even deeper into His heart. He is worth it. The fruit we see is worth it. May we all be granted ever-increasing power to comprehend His love, which has overcome the world....

We are encouraged by displays of His power, which are increasing along with the numbers of our churches. In Malawi an old man with a large, terribly infected ulcer on his foot came for prayer. It looked so ghastly, like gangrene or cancer, I thought amputation was the only natural answer. We returned later and his foot was covered over with smooth skin. He grinned and laughed as he showed me his foot, which he was walking on perfectly normally. In Chimoio a blind man spontaneously received his sight as we worshiped. He had been seeing light, but it was all a blur, and suddenly he could see clearly. He immediately called out and jumped to the platform to testify, completely thrilled. In Dondo a few days ago a man was near death, suffering from a huge parasite in his abdomen. The hospital could do nothing. He couldn't sleep for fear of not waking up. During a time of healing ministry he felt a movement in his body and his pain and condition were gone. During that same conference a little girl paralyzed from the waist down for eight months was healed. Her mother fervently preached to the crowd as the girl walked normally all over the platform. Our staff is compiling these and many more testimonies in detail so we can encourage those who are interested as much as possible.

By now we have had about a dozen resurrections from the dead in our churches. These result in sudden church growth and huge encouragement, but we have learned that not everyone is impressed or radically changed. May we never get so hardened! Now in this time of serious famine we are asking our leaders to pray over every sack of maize, that the Holy Spirit would multiply the grain. We have seen food multiplied repeatedly before, and now we cry out for supernatural help on a large scale....

We are extremely blessed to see the Holy Spirit especially touch our leaders from provinces where we have most recently established a presence. We are now in all ten provinces of Mozambique, and in the last year have seen seven churches established in Cabo Delgado, a heavily Moslem province. Our provincial leader there, Jose, testified powerfully at our conference last week, proclaiming that he knew by experience that Jesus was real and present. In a vision during the meeting he saw a large flock of doves

flying over our speakers' platform, and then moving out and descending on people. Some were bothered and waved the doves away, refusing their presence. But others were receptive, and Jose saw the doves disappear right into their hearts. May we never quench the Holy Spirit, but always receive Him with open, longing hearts!

7 June 2005

Dark rain clouds loom on the northwest horizon, directly in our flight path. Row after row of mountain ridges stand before us. We have no weather briefing. We have never flown this route before. We are heading for yet another country, but do not have a landing permit, or visas. No airlines fly where we are going, and the journey by road through the forest below is long and dangerous. Air traffic control in Kigali clears us to eight thousand five hundred feet on track, releasing us in calm tones to the unknown.

We dodge initial rain flurries, but soon we hit the inevitable downpour. Sheets of water strike our windshield with furious intensity, wildly distorting all forward vision. Our state-of-the-art noise-canceling headsets barely tame the roar of the rain beating on our Cessna's aluminum skin. But I can see down, and I know from my charts what elevations lie ahead. On we press, our destination less than an hour away.

The storm is very localized, and soon we get through it and move on. But the clouds hang low and we must descend and angle our way back and forth to clear the wild terrain below by hundreds of feet. Shadowy cliffs and peaks materialize and fade in the mist. Huts hide in tiny clearings among trees on hilltops. Now the ridges are lower, and ahead we get our first sight of the lake we are expecting. We see only a corner of it, but we are excited because we know it marks the border of our next ministry frontier, the Democratic Republic of the Congo!

Soon Lake Kivu opens up before us, a jewel sixty miles long with its inlets and islands spread below in a creative array almost five thousand feet high in the very center of Africa. We are far from the plains of the Serengeti that we flew over yesterday, and

even farther from the beaches and sand of Mozambique over a thousand miles behind us. We are compelled to preach the gospel here too. In the service of our King we have eagerly taken hold of this opportunity to bring more revival fire to a region long isolated by instability, violence and bloodshed.

Beside me in our heavily loaded Cessna 206 is Surpresa Sithole, our international director of Iris Ministries along with Heidi and me. He incessantly presses me in the Lord for more ministry flights to the north and west of Africa, and beyond. Darfur, Ethiopia, Angola, and on to the Middle East—our vision is revival, visitation and the unmeasured outpouring of the Holy Spirit all the way to Jerusalem from southern Africa. The seeds of this movement sprang up in 1998 with a small band of pastors who gathered for Bible school at our fledgling children's center in Maputo, Mozambique. Since then a fiery hunger for God has spread across the land in spite of floods, famines, weaknesses and troubles without number, heavy demonic attack, and the world's worst poverty.

We had loaded our Cessna with as much sound equipment as we could fit into the plane with our luggage. Then back in Rwanda we also squeezed in Pastor Joseph, our host in the Congo, and his young son, who just barely fit on his lap. Our seats are all fully forward, and we can hardly move, but we are almost there. Our destination is Bukavu, a town on the south shore of the lake with a small strip usually in use only by military and humanitarian aid organizations.

I just have a simple chart, and have to call area control at Goma for Bukavu's tower frequency. We descend over the lake looking hard for still another airport I have never seen before. The runway is hidden behind a hill, and as we come around, one end slowly comes into view. We make radio contact, and extend our downwind to make room for a military transport on final approach. We land and taxi slowly on the rough tarmac toward a group of planes at the far end of the field. A marshall is waving his arms and directs us to a stop.

We are extreme curiosities at the airport. Uniformed flight crews of UN helicopters and NGO transports pause to inspect our little white-and-blue plane and the Iris Ministries logo on its tail, and wonder at us. We have to push it way off into the dirt to park it away from the prop wash of much bigger planes. Finally we are allowed to unload, and all can see from our speakers and equipment that we are here to preach. Armed guards let us out the gate, and another crowd is waiting for us—this time laughing, shouting, jumping and waving their arms with excitement. They are local Christians, and they are overjoyed. The Iris missionaries have come! They are not alone! Jesus has heard their prayers! Their family in God is growing! Let revival burn!

A car pulls up to take us into Bukavu, and it is the mayor's private Land Cruiser, even if an old model. The drive is surprisingly long, and punishing on this road. Following the lake shore, we can see that we are in an exquisite setting, an idyllic vacation spot for Europeans in a colonial past long gone. But soon we also see that war and fighting have reduced Bukavu to a broken, impoverished shell of a town mired in deep suffering. We are told that less than a year ago the town was controlled by rebels, and the shooting in the streets was so fierce that residents had to hide in their houses for weeks at a time. Even now instability is great, soldiers are everywhere, and more fighting is expected, especially with elections coming up. The government cannot control all of this huge country, and anarchy is spreading.

It's a gray day. Only a few streets are paved. We bounce and lurch over deep ruts and potholes. Rain comes and goes. We can see from storefronts, shacks and stalls along the way that the local economy is barely functional. We know that millions and even billions of dollars have been stashed away in foreign bank accounts by various groups plundering Congo's vast mineral wealth, leaving the people in deep poverty still. Africa's wars are fueled by struggles over wealth and resources, but Mozambique has very little to fight over but a coastline.

We turn into a narrow alley, and as we move on we see a crowd of people apparently waiting for us. We get closer and as they recognize us they suddenly break out singing and dancing. They are intense, excited, jubilant! We jump out, and ignoring the rain and deep, sticky mud weighing our shoes down, we run into their embraces. The Congolese kiss on both cheeks and bump foreheads to greet each other, and we learn quickly. Supresa and I came to inaugurate Iris Congo with a conference, and we are here! This is it! We finally made it!

The people have been waiting for days. Many have come long distances. Everyone is expectant; the mood is electric. This is a tremendous moment! Jesus has not forgotten them! Let's have church! We gradually move to the conference "center" by stepping one-by-one through a narrow door in a cement block wall into a courtyard. Mud and water are all over the floor under scattered benches. There's a tin roof, but it's not big enough and we have to put up plastic sheeting for the rain. There's no electricity, but we brought a generator and soon I have our sound system set up. Hundreds of people are crowded in and we can begin our first session!

This is Africa, so we have drums, we have rhythm and harmony, we have dancing, we have bright costumes, we have plenty of energy and life even on this dark, gray, wet day. Supresa and I are introduced. Everyone is wildly enthusiastic. They have been looking forward to these days with us with all their hearts. We are humbled and intimidated. Who is adequate for these things?—but God has made us adequate as servants of a new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6). I begin to speak quietly and gently, reminding the people that God responds not simply because we pray loudly and get excited, but because we love Him. Within a few minutes the Holy Spirit has taken over the meeting. In just a flash the people are no longer dancing and performing before the Lord, but are agonizing for His presence and company. Perspiration and tears are pouring down faces. Young and old, men and women are shaking and collapsing with emotional intensity. Longing and desperation are boiling to the surface and exploding. Pent-up suffering is

being released as hearts fall deep into the gracious heart of the most romantic lover in the universe, our Savior and King. I cannot speak much more. All Surpresa and I can do is pray over people. Fire has fallen already. Desire has attracted the Spirit of all comfort and joy.

We realize we are in a different sort of place. This is not church as usual. The people will not be denied. They cannot passively wait on God. In their extremity they know Jesus is their only hope. They can only do one thing: cry out with every ounce of life remaining in their souls. Existence in this world has been so cruel to these people that they don't look for relief anywhere but the Creator and Redeemer Himself. Without any effort on our part, Surpresa and I watch the Holy Spirit release these hearts passionately reaching out for life.

Twenty-eight local churches have come into Iris right at the start of this ministry visit. Many of the pastors of these churches are at these meetings. Others have been longingly waiting for us at Goma and other locations, but we only have time for Bukavu on this trip. These churches are poor, without even the most basic necessities of administration, like electricity, paper, a desk, lights or a file cabinet. They function in tiny bare rooms with leaking ceilings and dirt floors. We had to bring US\$ cash so we could feed everyone over three days of meetings, and we cook the plainest food in big pots over wood fires on the floor. Our physical conditions are cold, wet and dirty, but in these hearts present this day we see the intense heat of hearts drawing near to God with rare force and energy.

The Holy Spirit continues to fall strongly on us for three days. Some of course are watching wide-eyed and wondering from the back, but in the front desire and faith are igniting a real revival. The Holy Spirit is emotional and passionate, and often very physical. He is intense, burning up with love, anxious to break out and overcome people with supernatural life. He knows how to respond to each person's cries, and how each needs to be loved. The blazing presence of God burns out every evil thought, each petty

desire, all selfish ambition. There is nothing left but what God wants, what he values, what dazzles and thrills Him! We are being transformed into fit companions for the King!

As always during these frontline forays into new territory, it is an extreme challenge to present in our limited time what the people most need to hear. But increasingly we learn to relax and flow with the Holy Spirit, praying that God's every purpose for this trip will be fulfilled. Through all the tears and laughter, repentance and joy, worship and celebration, healings and deliverances, we find time to teach the most basic and critical foundations of the gospel. This movement does not chase health and wealth, or manifestations, or signs and wonders. We preach Jesus and Him crucified, and the power of the Cross. Nothing counts but faith working through love, producing joy! We seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things will chase us! We are learning how to be rich in good deeds, and blessed with godliness and contentment. We are falling in love with Him who is love, until nothing in this world attracts us like He does....

After all these years of preaching in the bush among the poor and faraway, we realize we have seen just the beginning of what God plans for Africa. North Africa, considered almost off-limits for the Christian gospel, is beckoning. Jesus has no competition once His reality, love and power are known. Angola and West Africa are calling. The multitudes want what is real. Our bodies are exhausted, our time is stretched beyond endurance, our wisdom for shepherding this movement is finite, but each morning we find ourselves renewed by the power of God. These pastors in Bukavu are ready to preach all across the Congo, taking the fire of God everywhere they go. We must encourage them; we must do our part; we must obey. Our lives are worth nothing to us, if only we may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given us—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24).

We have to go, but it's not easy. The people are begging us to return soon, reaching out for all the business cards I have, asking for more prayer. This revival is their

life and hope in Jesus. We finally make it to the airport late in the afternoon. A thunderstorm is closing in, and sunset is not far behind. The airport officials are not impressed with our urgency, slowly and deliberately plowing us through paperwork, inspections and fee payments. Guarding soldiers need to be paid. Now the rain is torrential and we have to wait even longer. It lets up and finally we taxi out, take off and head toward the dark, cloudy southeast and Kigali. Again we are skimming ridges in the rain and mist, barely seeing our way. Kigali's airport is mercifully more clear. We land just before dark, the only small plane at the airport, and find that there is no aviation gas in the country. But that is another story.... Our Congo adventure is over, and yet only just beginning...

A New Start

Toward the end of 2007 I began to face a very severe, oppressive attack on my health that lasted two years and eventually took me to the brink of death with incurable dementia. In what amounted to a resurrection, I was completely healed by God and restored to more fruitful ministry than ever. And so the rest of this chapter concentrates on our ministry activities since my recovery, and what God has done among us since.

First, I include a perspective from my wife Heidi, a message which she preached to encourage those going through the darkest days of their lives:

One day, while I was ministering in Pasadena, California, the doctor visited me in the hotel, and said, "You need to call your family and friends to come and say goodbye to your husband because in a few weeks, he won't recognize them, and won't even be able to swallow, and he will die. This is incurable, and although we believe in miracles, you need to understand the situation." The doctor took my daughter aside and said, "Understand, your father is going to die, you need to go and see him."

"Oh God, oh God, oh God," we cried, but we were not afraid, because even death has no sting. The devil has been defeated, and we are free from the fear of death.

The fear of death enslaves many hearts, but I am fearless and not afraid to die. I have been shot at five times, stoned, threatened with knives and machetes, slammed against walls and thrown in jail, and I tell you, beloved friends, I am a fearless little one. I am not afraid to die because I have seen the beauty of the realms of Jesus, and I have proclaimed, “Yes, Lord!”

When everything is shaking on one side and glorious on the other, what do you do, beloved of God? What do you do when you see deaf ears hear, but still have a husband who cannot even put on his own flip-flops? What do you do? Fix your eyes on Jesus; the apostle and high priest whom you confess is worthy of more glory than Moses.

One of the first people I called was one of our dearest friends, and Rolland’s best friend, Mel Tari, a Christian leader who has walked with us for thirty-three years; in fact, he was best man at our wedding. Mel has seen and witnessed revival; he has seen the dead rise.

“I’m just not accepting that report. It just will not happen! I will not go and say goodbye to him. No way. No! Thank you very much. No!”

“Mel,” I said, “I appreciate that, sweetie, I appreciate that...but we have prayed for two years. Everyone has prayed. You’ve prayed. You have raised the dead repeatedly, but this is what we are facing.”

“It is not God’s plan. I am not facing it. I’m coming to get him, and I’m taking him to Germany to a wellness center where they will pray for his healing while caring for his physical needs.”

“But Mel,” I replied, “we have that here. Why do I need to drag him off somewhere else? We have had hundreds of people raised from the dead. He can’t even travel.”

“I don’t care. I’m coming to get him.”

As it happened, a fellow who worked with us agreed to take him to Germany for health treatments where I would soon meet up with them. However, when I got there,

Rolland was worse than before, and I thought, Now what will we do? Thirty people are flying to Mozambique to visit Rolland as the doctor suggested, but now they all have to change their tickets to Germany?

In my heart I thought, “Lord, it just isn’t fair. I don’t think it’s fair. I’m not liking this! What is going on?”

“I’m doing something,” said the Lord.

“Please do it, just do it, God. I know that you are good, you are good all the time. I’m sure what you are doing is good, but I don’t get it.”

I had to go back to Mozambique and leave Rolland under Mel’s watchful eye in the wellness center. Our good friends, John and Carol Arnott, Georgian and Winnie Banov, DeAnne and Randy Clark, and many others counseled me to speak to his spirit. “Speak to his spirit-man. Tell it to get up and wake up,” they encouraged.

So, every day, I would call my husband and speak “Wake-up” into his soul. “Wake up! Wake UP! Wake Up! Be alive! Fly! Restore! Think! Be free! Live! Love! Feel! Wake up, Rolland! It is time to awaken now! Wake up now!” Within a few months, we saw improvement as the Lord began restoring Rolland’s mind, filling and occupying his house, and my sleeping man began to awaken, to remember, to care for himself, to walk, to call me!

Understand, here was my husband who could do nothing, who had a death sentence over him, who spent twenty-two hours a day in bed with no recall, who could not even fold a piece of paper. The simplest things were too confusing for this brilliant, brilliant man, the most brilliant person I had ever known.

We are God’s house. You and Rolland are God’s house, built by God, the builder of everything. God wants to fill your house where dementia or cancer cannot stand, where anger and hatred cannot stand, and where injustice cannot rule. He promises His faithfulness over you if you hold onto courage, the hope of which you boast.

Rolland used to fly bush planes for our ministry to help us reach more lost and broken for Christ. Guess what? He recently passed his flying exam! Do you know what it takes to fly an aircraft? A sound mind, coherency, the ability to use complicated charts, graphs and instruments. God gave him back everything, plus, plus. God is giving back again! He is giving back what the enemy has stolen from you. Take it back, take it back! Step into a new place. Dance, rejoice, be free!

21 September 2009

Heidi and I would both be dead by now if our doctors had been right.

A few years ago Heidi was in the hospital for a month with a staph infection that went out of control. The doctors gave up on her and told her she could write her tombstone! Then suddenly, while preaching in a lot of pain, God healed her, and the next morning she was out jogging!

Four months ago I was diagnosed with terminal dementia, and was barely alive. I needed help to shower, change clothes, put on my shoes, clip my fingernails. I didn't know what country I was in, and couldn't remember anything from the day before. Heidi built a room for a full-time caregiver for me in Mozambique. Doctors said I wouldn't live long, and family was called.

I had friends who wouldn't give up on me, and they sent me to a Christian center in Germany where I received incredible medical care in a faith-filled environment. Today I am back in Pemba ministering the gospel, ready to fly my plane again, and reconnected with our friends and staff here. I look forward to pushing back the frontiers of missions in Sudan, DRCongo and wherever the need is greatest.

We cannot function in this world without the power of our God. Some of us haven't yet been brought to our extremity, and so we aren't fully and forcibly aware of our dependence. But our time will come. We need Him to stay alive. We need Him for

our health. We need Him for our healing. We need Him for righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We need more than talk. We need Him more than church, a missions program or financial support. We need more than any human being can do for us. We need sheer, raw power in the goodness and love of God. We need power to appreciate our God, to make Him the greatest pleasure in our lives. We need power to rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. We need power to experience His Kingdom, to move in His environment.

How do we get power? It is the grace and gift of God. He plants in us a hunger that will not be denied. He opens our eyes to our poverty without His powerful presence. He grants faith where there was none. In His power we can rest even while under demonic attack. His power fixes our eyes on Him. In His power we are able to discipline ourselves in everything. We can cast our cares on Him because He is willing to use His power on our behalf.

How can we be sure He cares for us? The cross. We go to the cross always to find confidence to approach Him. We will not empty the cross of its power. There and only there we find salvation of every kind. At the cross we come to know our God and His heart toward us. At the cross we learn to become utterly dependent on His power.

We are driving to another village outreach, the joy of our lives in Mozambique. The road is dark. Traffic is very occasional. Our Land Rover is loaded on top with tents, sleeping bags, everything we need to stay overnight. We are carrying as many as we can. Along the way we explain to our visitors how we operate, planting churches every five kilometers along the roads. Now in seven years we have planted well over one thousand churches among the Makua, an “unreached and unreachable” people group in our Cabo Delgado province. Our destination appears in the night, marked by bright lights, a screen, and a whole village of people gathered together. As we draw closer we see that many

have come from neighboring villages. Our advance team has gone before us, setting up a generator, sound system and video projector. We have been here before, and many know our worship songs.

Two languages are needed because of the diversity of the crowd, Portuguese and Makua. Heidi preaches and many are added to the faith. We pray for the sick, and two deaf people hear. The people sing and dance their hearts out. Clouds of dust rise in the floodlights as they exude the joy of their salvation. Heaven is touching down in this remote spot on the planet as God visits the people of His choice. The power of God is transforming hearts and giving hope. The Kingdom of God is advancing yet again.

Late into the night our Makua team have prepared dinner for us: spaghetti! We have a pile of plastic plates, and they eagerly and proudly produce a feast for us, dipping into a big pot of plain spaghetti which we eat with our fingers. Village children come streaming in to eat with us. There are no latrines in the village, so we fend for ourselves in the sticks and bush. We manage to put up our tents with a few flashlights. Heidi and I bring cots, since we do this so frequently. With city lights nonexistent around us, the stars are magnificently and densely scattered across the sky, its southern constellations so unfamiliar to us from the northern hemisphere.

We squeeze into our tents, change into shorts to beat the heat, and drift off to sleep as we pray. The village is up and lively at daybreak. Heidi has Starbucks coffee for our team. Mozambican friends enjoy the new experience of drinking this new treat. We start our service in our new church plant, a reed-and-mud simple little room. We have three weddings to perform. Our visiting friend Terry speaks to the couples. Again the villagers erupt with singing and dancing, and the joy is infectious among us all.

The village is building a new church structure, but the people are almost penniless. We give them enough money to buy roof material as they have already built the walls. They are thrilled. Next our Mozambican team teaches AIDS awareness seminars and more Bible studies. We bless the people with final words of teaching and

encouragement, and amid a laughing, running crowd of children pull out of the village onto the road. We will be back!

On the way home we reflect with our visitors on the people movement we are witnessing. There doesn't seem to be any limit to the number of churches we can plant if we have enough provision and people to help. The whole province is coming alive. Everywhere the poor are hearing the Good News and running to the Savior. We are just beginning to see what is possible in the Lord.

The glittering blue-green ocean couldn't be any more beautiful. The gleaming wet bodies of children are energetically running, leaping and cartwheeling all up and down the beach. Many others are splashing and diving in the water. Palm trees and lazily moving cumulus clouds complete an atmosphere of freedom, peace and joy. Today we are celebrating with our children all the birthdays of the month, and our students' success in our school. After hours of play we all gather to distribute gifts. Each birthday child and top student gets a colorful bag full of simple presents. Then we line everyone up for cake and soft drinks. From two-year-olds to teenagers, everyone is enjoying a very rich day together. Festivities like this are rare in such a poor country.

It is our calling and heritage to bring such life to the homeless, the desperately poor and forgotten beggars of the street. Their flashing white smiles are a reward Jesus gives us. We love bringing salvation to the least of these. Without the power of God we could not exist here. Our every Coke and bag of gifts is made possible by the miraculous generosity of God's people. Our missionary and Mozambican teams are heroes to us. Our passion and compassion are ignited by the Holy Spirit. Our health and sustenance come from Him. Our hope for all these children comes from the gospel alone. For us every day is a celebration of our life in Jesus.

2 December 2009

The water is warm and clear, absolutely beautiful, lapping quietly on the sandy beach. Rich green trees line the shore, trunks half covered by the high tide. The sounds of splashing and the laughter of children are all around. Beautiful faces are bobbing up and down. One by one African children are diving into this ocean paradise and swimming out to deeper water with their beloved Mama Heidi. Her blonde hair stands out among all the black children and contrasts strikingly with our blue-green watery world over the coral reef. It's a brilliant, gorgeous African day here in our remote, northeast corner of Mozambique.

From our boat deck I look out from a short stretch of beach at the stick-and-mud huts set back from the ocean on a small hill. This is the village of Londo, isolated by the wild bush and accessible only by sea. Until we landed here the people of Londo lived their lives for generations without ever hearing the name of Jesus. But on learning of His love and power, they opened their hearts without reservation, and He is transforming this village measure by measure.

A few hours ago our team arrived after crashing through open ocean swells for an hour coming across the bay from our base in Pemba. The people, young and old, swarmed to our boat shouting and jumping. They know Mama Heidi very well now, and are thrilled to receive visitors who bring more love from their heavenly Father. We carefully unloaded our cargo: a battery-powered sound system, gifts for the children and lots of lollipops and drinks.

We climbed the hill to the simple school and church we helped to build, and had a joyful service, singing and praising the Lord of all creation. Our very close friend, Mel Tari from the Indonesian revival, preached on the glory of being found by Jesus on a very remote island in the Pacific. Heidi helped us put on a Christmas skit which was hilarious and moving to the kids. We passed out candy and drinks, and gave each child a backpack

and flipflops. A great highlight was giving out awards for the best students of different ages at the little school Iris built for the village. No one here had any education until the school was formed. Everything had to be provided from scratch: books, papers, pencils—and a teacher! We added an adult literacy course, and now the older men and ladies are reading for the first time.

I noticed that all the time the children were laughing and dancing in the church, grownups were standing and sitting in the windows grinning broadly at all that was going on. Jesus has not forgotten Londo, and is sustaining us through many challenges so that we can continue to show real love to this village and reach many more Mozambicans so isolated in this wild, remote province. We have seen more than one thousand bush churches planted in Cabo Delgado since we arrived seven years ago, and yet we feel like we are just beginning to see what God can do.

It's time to go. We climb back into our boat and wave goodbye to our amazing village family in Jesus. We will be back. They even built Heidi and me a mud hut just for us so we can stay longer. We head back to the open ocean, and once again the big swells crash against our boat and soak us with spray. We take it as the powerful wind and water of the Holy Spirit and pray for all the more. Take us anywhere you want, Lord. We will go to the farthest corners of Mozambique, or anywhere in the world, if only we can see you reveal your glory among your chosen people!

Our team is standing in another village courtyard way out in the bush. It's dark, but the stars are out and the moon is shining brightly. It's a beautiful night. Our big truck from Pemba is our preaching platform. Our faithful generator is running, powering our sound system and one strong floodlight. Heidi is silhouetted against the light and very excited, telling stories in her own animated way to illustrate the gospel. The whole village is gathered together to listen, all the children sitting up front paying close attention.

They've been singing and dancing as only Africans can, and clouds of dust still hang in the air.

We've been here before. Most of the villagers are already enthusiastic believers, and a church has been established. But we love to re-visit our churches and keep the fires of the Holy Spirit burning. Tonight we pray for the sick, as always, and yet again the deaf hear. Two are healed, one the son-in-law of the village pastor. Both have been deaf for years, and suddenly are learning to speak again. The demonstrated power of God grips the people, and increased faith rises up to heaven once more.

Unexpectedly tonight we are moved deeply by our thanksgiving dinner. Heidi and I are invited to the pastor's hut to eat. There is nothing in the hut but a plain table, little wooden chairs, a local rope bed and a few changes of clothes hanging on a clothesline. We learn that our hosts have done the most special thing they could for us. Once a year they eat chicken, and tonight they have killed their one scrawny little chicken for their guests of honor. We each get a tiny piece or two, and the chicken sauce is delicious, which we enjoy by dipping cakes of ground corn meal in it. We feel soaked in the rich love of God as we partake of the very best this pastor and his family have to offer. Finally we take our leave, and with great thanksgiving we go to our tents and fall asleep for the night. All is quiet, and Jesus is with us.

We wake up early, wet with perspiration as the rising sun heats our tents. After coffee and bread, and lots of fellowship, we gather with the villagers to dedicate the new children's house. We have been instituting a system of church-based orphan care in as many villages as possible, asking each pastor to take care of a dozen full orphans. We gather in the house to pray with our orphans, who are not orphans any more, but fully adopted into the family of God and by the Body of Christ in the village. The pastor, his wife and his new children under their care are beaming. We are putting together a child sponsorship program that we pray will miraculously support these children and thousands more like them all over Mozambique.

As we emerge from the children's house, we are met with a surprise. Moslem leaders in their caps and gowns have come to the village from the nearby mosque which serves the Moslem community of the whole area. They heard about the deaf being healed the night before, and they want prayer too! They bring us extravagant offerings of a pair of doves and a rooster! They also are touched and healed as we pray in the name of Jesus. They grin and are so pleased. We leave them with a solar Bible. May the love of God continue to spread across this province as more and more come to know the power of the Cross.

We head off for a baptismal service in the local watering hole. Many of the local believers and even a few visitors are baptized in the middle of a powerful African rain storm. It's a long drive back to Pemba, but we are ready. Tired and hungry, we climb in our Land Rover for home. But we have been fed in the Spirit, and one more village has felt the power of the age to come. We are sustained, and next week we will be out in the bush again, spreading the Kingdom with all His energy that works so powerfully in us.

Rain is pouring down through the thick trees all around us. Pools of water stand in the deep mud surrounding our bush church. A throng of Mozambicans are huddled together, tightly packed as they try to find space to stay out of the rain. Plastic and canvas sheets have been spread out from the church roof, held up by sticks and poles, to keep the rain off as many people as possible. But the downpour is heavy, conditions are wet and miserable, and the whole situation is a very unlikely setting for revival. We are having a bush conference in Inhambane Province, which we have rarely visited, and people have come from hundreds of miles around. They are hungry, physically and spiritually, and I am praying that the Holy Spirit will make the most of our time together, however the devil tries to dampen the occasion.

The rain is loud, and the people in the back standing in the mud can hardly hear our simple sound system. What can the Holy Spirit do here? Plenty! Right now He is

cleansing the entire assembly of demonic oppression. Tears are running down faces and bodies are shaking. Hands are lifted high. A huge outcry is rising up to heaven. I have just asked how many are being harassed and afflicted by demons, and nearly everyone stood up. Mozambique is riddled with witchcraft and demonic power, and so many churchgoers are syncretistic, going to witch doctors as well as God to try to meet their desperate needs. Every chance we get in our Bible schools and churches we urge the people to make a clean and total break from powers of darkness. So now I have asked the people to confess anything and everything that is still wrong in their hearts so that they can be cleansed and protected from evil forces. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came in force, and I can't preach over the sound of repentant voices loudly crying for mercy and help. I and our pastors lay hands on as many as we can reach. We rebuke all evil power. Finally a mood of great peace and relief settles on everyone, and we move gently into the rest of our service.

At one point the electric power quits, leaving us sitting silently in the dark to the sound of the still heavy rain. But soon the people sing, without a dominating keyboard, and their pure, powerful voices blend and pulse with uniquely African harmony and rhythm. Their worship is spine-tingling. Our little, muddy, wet conference has become a taste of heaven on earth.

After a few days we leave, flying in a little Cessna to our next meetings to the north in Sofala Province. We are conscious of the wonder of our huge, far-flung Mozambican family, now over ten thousand churches strong. The Holy Spirit miraculously binds our churches together, giving us a united heart for a transformed society of humble, Spirit-filled believers saved by the blood of Jesus.

It's taking a long time, but no one cares. We are distributing dozens of bicycles to pastors so they can evangelize and plant churches over greater distances here in Nampula Province. It's dark, hot and humid. Our simple, poor, but large city church is packed out,

lit only by several small, bare bulbs. One by one pastors are called out and they make their way forward. We lay hands on each one and pray for them as we give each a bicycle. Some of our pastors have been walking ten, twenty or thirty miles a day to plant churches, in the rain and mud, dust and heat, day and night. So we anoint each bicycle, praying that angels and the power of the Holy Spirit will accompany each one wherever it goes, and that our spiritual leaders will bear all the more fruit. They have been waiting for these bicycles for years, and now the Lord has provided through a church in Curatiba, Brazil.

Many have been raised from the dead in this province, and the name of the Lord has become famous among the desperately poor who frequently face illness without medical care. Demons fight all they can, but they are being pushed back. Tonight I preach, and call the hungry forward for prayer. We missionaries and pastors lay hands on as many as possible. The Holy Spirit touches each one as He will, according to their faith and desire. One young girl is thrashing on the floor, possessed by an evil spirit. She is delivered as one of our Iris missionaries, Antoinette, prays over her, washes her clean, and comforts her until she is calm and peaceful. And then, as she smiles with quiet joy, the girl is given a beautiful vision of heaven!

Late in the night our team finds a little restaurant still open, and once again we reflect on what God has done among us. Against all odds and in spite of every hardship, God is pouring enough love, patience, endurance, determination, faith and vision into pastors in this province to accomplish miracles of growth that we never expected years ago. Our appetites are whetted. The more He does, the more we desire even more! May the intensity of His presence in this province never stop increasing.

Wild celebration! High energy African dancing, arm-in-arm! Hearts bursting with praise! Many hit by the intense power of the Holy Spirit and all the variety of His emotions! Singing with all the heart and soul! Faces dripping with perspiration, but full

of joy! Missionaries praying for pastors; pastors praying for students; students praying for teachers; everyone praying for everyone! This is graduation day for our Harvest mission school and Bible school. We are seeing a tremendous day of worship, blending black and white, rich and poor, foreigners and nationals as we mark the end of almost three months of classes and outreaches at our Pemba base.

Our speaker, Mel Tari, gave us a powerful message on the significance of this day in the plans of God for each pastor and student. We and the Body of Christ worldwide are winning the war against the powers of darkness, and the African continent will not be left out! It is exhilarating to watch our village pastors jump and shout as they sing, “Go, go go!” They will go to the uttermost parts of this nation, carrying the gospel with all the love and power they have been given. Pray with us for their safety, health, strength and anointing as they face every kind of challenge. Pray also for our mission students as they follow their calls throughout the world. Many are interviewing for long-term service with Iris, and we are so blessed.

17 December 2009

It's a dark, rainy day, unusual for Pemba. The southern hemisphere's summer is upon us, and our fans feel so good in the heat and humidity. No white Christmas here, but we have been celebrating the season in our own way, and spirits are high. In a few days Heidi and I leave for California to spend Christmas with our own children, but now it is a joy to reflect on how the Lord has blessed our Iris family here in Pemba as we celebrate Christmas early. The ocean spread out before our house is a stormy gray, but the Holy Spirit has been with us in all His brilliance and peace.

For Christmas we took our children to the beach and we had a wild, great party. Of course there was lots of running, jumping, flipping and splashing as the children played in our awesome Pemba water. It was a brilliant day, with warm breezes and

rustling palm trees. Then we all grouped together and had an hilarious time with games. It was fantastic to watch all those bright smiles and hear all the loud laughter. Jesus has brought them into a whole new world!

Heidi organized some children with simple costumes and props, and they put on a nativity play right there on the beach. The children will not forget it! We held races in the sand, and the children ran with all their might to the finish line, which was a line of missionaries with their arms held out to grab the children and hug them with all their love. Some of the time we just relaxed, sitting under trees in the shade talking and laughing. Finally the suspense was over and the climax came—we passed out hundreds of bags of wrapped presents along with drinks. Somehow we kept the lines under control, and each child came away beaming, feeling very excited and loved.

May the Holy Spirit look after each one of these children, and raise them up in the knowledge of the Lord, bearing fruit all throughout their lives!

We all gathered at Maringanha, our new property at a wild, undeveloped stretch of beach a few miles from Pemba. We had construction workers, guards, cooks, teachers, houseparents, administrators—everyone in our Iris family who works for us. Many had never experienced Christmas, or the generous, gracious heart of God, until they came to Iris. Heidi and I were determined to give them the greatest time possible. We've built a nice, big, round, open, breezy prayer house with a thatched roof there, and when I arrived it was already packed. We set up a generator and sound system, and lots of us started dancing African-style with abandon. This last year we produced our own Makua worship CD, and we had it playing as loud as possible. It was so beautiful.

Heidi arrived, and started organizing some wild, fun games with lots of running, racing, jumping and cheering. We had a blast on into late afternoon, and then as we were treated to a fantastic African sunset over the water, we blessed and thanked our workers

for all their labor in the Lord. After a very special chicken and rice dinner, we plugged in a floodlight and kept celebrating and worshiping the Lord. Finally we closed by passing out gifts. Heidi and I sat together on chairs, and we kissed and hugged each worker according to African custom as they came by and received their wrapped present.

There are many ways of appreciating the power of God's love, but today we have again tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and that He is transforming the lives of lost sheep even here in remote Pemba.

We start church at eight in the morning with prayer and intercession. By nine and ten the crowd swells with men, women and children from our center and all over Pemba. Church is never predictable. Different groups sing and dance. We worship with all our hearts. Foreigners and Mozambicans pray for each other. Our children lay hands on and bless our visitors. We soak in prayer on grass mats, seeking Him and His presence.

But today is special. Our Mozambicans put on a Christmas play, with angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, a horse, goats and hay, a manger and a real baby Jesus. Another wave of worship sweeps over the people, and we revel in God's amazing, overwhelming gift of His Son to the world.

Many of our Mozambican visitors know very little of the Bible, but this drama will burn the story of Christmas into their hearts. What a privilege it is for us to be able to bring the Good News to Pemba in such a vivid way. This Christmas we appreciate more than ever the beautiful, international family that God has formed among us here.

1 March 2010

Heidi and I are back in Pemba after traveling since January on an intense ministry schedule that has taken us all over Asia, to Europe and across Africa. It has been a thrill to see the power of God fall on hungry believers all over the world. The Body of Christ is getting more and more desperate for God, willing to pay any price to experience His

presence and companionship. There is no pleasure like walking and talking with Him, leaning on Him alone for every possible care and desire of our hearts.

How much more of Him do we want? He is able and willing to pour out His Spirit without measure. May we never lose our appetite for more righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit! All these are found only in our magnificent Savior, with all the intensity and fire of the author of life Himself!

This is not the time to be hindered by doubts, divisions and politics in the church. We don't have room for worrying about titles, positions, credits and recognition. We can't be bothered with concerns over support and publicity. We don't know how to engineer and program revival. We are dependent on our God like humble little children. What we have already seen and heard has raised our expectations to new heights. He is able to keep us, and finish what He began in us. We can trust Him with our hearts, our spirits, our health, anything that has to do with our well-being.

His power among us knows no limits. He baptizes us with His Spirit, and all things are possible when that happens. Deep conviction and repentance, sobs of love and gratitude, tongues and prophecy, waves of heat, purest peace and refreshment, super hunger for the Word of God, visions and visitation, revelation, healing, floods of heavenly joy, insatiable longing, wrenching intercession, singing in the Spirit, angels all around, weakness under the tangible, heavy weight of His Glory, a sense of wonder and awe at His presence....

We love His gifts, and all the touches and demonstrations of His love. They all propel us toward that ineffable goal written of by Christian mystics for centuries: union with God! "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17). When fruits of character are joined by gifts of power, truly our lives reflect His glory and presence. We need His love in our hearts. We also need His anointing to accomplish anything. We need both Word and Spirit.

We are still learning to go lower still, which is the only way forward. And we are still learning to stop for the one, in the middle of a sea of need. We are still learning what it means to be a friend of God, and value fellowship with Him and each other above all else. We are not professional, high-power, efficient missionary machines. We measure the quality of our lives by the depth of our relationships. We are learning to love...

24 June 2010

“But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3 NASB).

We stay on track through all the differing ideas and streams in the church by maintaining our simplicity and purity. We fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. When pressed to the absolute limit, as was Paul, we determine to know nothing but Jesus and Him crucified—the only basis of our confidence. He is the dividing line, the stumbling block, the cutting edge, the point at which we meet salvation and life. No one in the universe is more controversial.

We trust and love Him because He died for us, and rose again on our behalf. He is the one who suffered for us. He paid the penalty for our sins. He purchased our lives with His blood. He showed us what love is. And so we are loyal to Him alone. We belong to Him, and not ourselves. We make it our ambition to please Him. If necessary, like Paul, we will suffer the loss of all things in order to have Him. We forsake every temptation in this life that takes us away from Him, even slightly. He is our greatest pleasure, our ultimate companion. We no longer love the world or anything in it, because He is the supreme object of our desire. Worthy is the Lamb!

We rejoice that we participate in His sufferings, so that we may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. To the end of this age we will endure evil opposition and glorify God by overcoming with faith proven to be genuine. In all our troubles, our joy

knows no bounds. As aliens and strangers in this world, we look forward to our perfect inheritance, kept in heaven for us.

In heaven Jesus will be exalted for His obedient suffering, and in the same way we will share in His reward. We conquer by taking the low road. We gain life by losing it, for His sake. We humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us at the proper time. We learn to love by laying down our lives for others, and in so doing, minister to God Himself.

It is impossible to be devoted to Jesus and not share Him, pure and simple. We cannot see Him now, but God has ordained that we love Him by loving each other, whom we can see. He is love, and so we cannot separate the first commandment from the second. There are many callings, but none higher than to give water to the thirsty and food to the hungry. The intercessors at home and the troops in the trenches are equals in the Kingdom. We learn to love just as we are gifted and called by God.

Missions is our joy, the simple, logical outcome of knowing Jesus. We have life and hope; others don't. We have reason to rejoice; others don't. We have love in our hearts; others don't. We have food and clothes; others don't. We have health; others don't. We have family; others don't. We have no reason to be anxious; others are weighed down with cares. It is obvious that the calling of every believer in Jesus is to have a part in correcting these imbalances.

That may take us across the street or around the world. It is also obvious that we should be utterly available to God to go anywhere and do anything, at any time. He can and will make a way as He leads us. That is the testimony of Iris Ministries, for thirty years.

We begin each day by immediately exercising our faith in Jesus to attack every problem and pressure we have. We throw all our anxiety on Him because He cares for us. This sets us free to rejoice in Him always, and take a positive view of everything. Then we pray for the greatest, most miraculous, victorious day ever! And on we go through the

rest of the day, loving and worshiping Him as we use our gifts, natural and supernatural, to bless everyone we can, as deeply as we can.

To us missions is the natural outworking of our faith. It is the way we return the love God has for us. There is no other option. Revival without missions is deficient. To turn away from the lost, poor and needy is to turn away from God. Our intimacy with Jesus extends to one another; such is the excellence and perfection of His Kingdom!

Dust hangs thick in the air, a shining cloud in the bright light pouring in from outside. I can hardly believe we're breathing it all. Rhythmic, pounding feet are kicking up every loose particle on the cement floor. Fire is in the atmosphere. Perspiration is pouring down every face. Life is in the building! Our Mozambican bush believers are dancing their hearts out, celebrating with all their might the dedication of our new church building in Mieze.

Nine years ago we came to this northern province of Cabo Delgado and started a base in Pemba, a small coastal town of some 50,000 people. The predominant Makua people group here was considered virtually unreached and unreachable. But the Holy Spirit backed us up with power, and kindled great hunger for God among the poorest of the poor, as we have seen Him do over and over all these years. Our second church plant was this one right here, just twenty minutes by road south of Pemba.

Since then our pioneering Mieze body of believers has developed into a forerunner for the rest of our churches across the province, which now number more than 1,700. Hundreds have been added since our last newsletter because so many national teams are planting and discipling. We can hardly keep up.... But the Mieze church has become more than a simple mud hut with meetings on Sunday. It has become a modest prototype of community development and transformation that continues to progress every week. Here we learn what is possible in God for the poor of this nation, how the Kingdom can impact every aspect of life in a village.

The Holy Spirit came to Mieze years ago, and His fire is blazing brighter than ever. The holy presence of God is manifested here in a beautiful kaleidoscope of ways, including healings that the people have come to expect and receive regularly. Right now it looks like dancing before the Lord with all our strength. But in today's meetings it also looks like deepest conviction; tears of desperation, repentance, longing and relief; quiet, glorious, weighty worship; and also the most energetic joy of the Lord....

The Presence in the bush of Africa also looks like homes, schools, farms, food, water wells, family, adoption of many children, fellowship, miracles, fun—the full spectrum of life in God! Today we also celebrate a brand-new building, the precious fruit of a lot of hard work and patience flowing from the vision of our Pastor Juma and director, Dr. Don Kintel. It is simple and basic to the extreme, but large and exciting, a community center of faith and hope in a sea of poverty.

We have very special visiting speakers, a working sound system (sometimes!), a worship team from Pemba, and the presence of Jesus Himself! Outside we have pitched our new evangelistic tent, covering more gatherings for children and special groups. Crowds have converged on us from all directions out of the bush, filling the church already, and with both solemnity and exuberance we are dedicating this physical building for the use of the Master, just as He chooses.

Out of isolation, paganism and witchcraft have risen a people given over to Jesus, and today we are thrilled. May Mieze show the way for the rural poor throughout our Iris family. Transformation is coming, in Jesus' Name!

It's cold inside my tent. I have a cot, which keeps me off the lumpy floor, but a crossbar is still jabbing me in the back, and it's hard to relax. I'm zipped up in a sleeping bag, with a tiny pillow, and I try to get comfortable somehow. I pray for a long time, just going over with Jesus what has happened tonight.

The dirt courtyard outside is covered with tents, all colors and shapes. We have a contingent from our Bible school and missions school camping for an overnight outreach here in Namanhumbiri, which has been called the most dangerous place in the province, maybe the country. All is just mud huts in this small, infamous town, but its reputation is known far and wide. Our unsaved Mozambican friends in Pemba are horrified that we are here. This place has a long history of out-of-control violence as the haunt of ruby smugglers who come from as far away as Somalia and Thailand to seek their fortune in gemstones however they can. Only recently has the government begun to tame its wildness, illegal trade and banditry. Children are sold for less than ten dollars. Sex slaves are pregnant at eleven years of age. Murders are frequent. Rich ruby deposits in the area have produced a den of evil in the otherwise beautiful and peaceful bush of central Cabo Delgado.

We already have a church and pastor in Namanhumbiri, but our leading Iris pastors in nearby towns have long prayed for a spiritual breakthrough here, and that we would bring teams to challenge the dark forces of the region. Tonight we had our second outreach in the town, after bringing in a big truckload of students on a long trip from Pemba. We showed the Jesus Film, as always, which had the complete attention of over a thousand viewers, including many children in the typical rags of Mozambican poverty. We preached our hearts out, and the response to the gospel was enthusiastic, yet again.

We always pray for the sick at these outreaches, and usually significant miracles rivet everyone's attention. We did see physical healings, but tonight was unusual because the greatest need among the crowd was for deliverance from evil spirits and alcoholism. It is common here for demons to choke people by the throat in the night. Our team laid hands on everyone within reach. Relief and joy spread through the throng as the power of the Holy Spirit set one oppressed soul after another free. Jesus is the answer, always, for everything!

Our little camp, so conspicuous among mud huts, has settled down. Most of our budding missionaries and local pastors are asleep now. I ask Jesus to post angels all around us for protection. Many hearts have opened to Him tonight, the bound and oppressed are tasting the thrill of freedom in the Spirit, pastors are happy, and we have taken a significant step toward transformation of this community. Heidi and I are shocked ourselves by how fast revival is spreading in northern Mozambique. We have added hundreds of churches in recent months, and now total around 1,700 churches in this one province. We live to bear fruit, and thanking Jesus for such a privilege, I join Heidi and fall asleep too.

At first light in the crisp morning we wake to quiet chatter as our visitors emerge from their strange-looking tents before curious, laughing village children standing all around. Breakfast is coffee, bread and jam, such a luxury here. Nobody is in a hurry as we relax and discuss our outreach and the unique challenges of this place.

But more happened last night than we realized. Interest is building around Heidi, who is seated over in a corner under a grass roof interviewing a young man who has a testimony. He is the nephew of the village chief, and he will never be the same. Since he was a small boy of around eight he has never heard a sound. He was at our meeting watching everything, but couldn't hear a thing. Heidi prayed for him, and then as he slept he had a vision in which a man in white came to him and put drops in his ear. This morning he woke up hearing perfectly, and able to talk again! Of course Heidi explained that the man was Jesus, and now we have another fervent believer among us!

Heidi and I have to leave by bush plane to other meetings, but we don't leave the team alone here, and arrange for them to be taken to a safer town for tonight. We encourage our pastor in the area and decide to meet with his people away from threats at his church building. So we all hike down a long dirt path past many ruby smugglers to a large, beautiful pond out of town, worship the Lord freely in the wild, open beauty, and baptize new believers among the flowers and lily pads in the cool water. Even those

hardened men we met along the way softened as we stopped for them too. We cannot have enough of revival in Africa!

Back in Pemba, our Mozambican friends outside our church are beginning to understand why we deliberately go to dark, dangerous places where there is so much suffering. We are not afraid. God's love is not powerless, and we bring His presence with us! Every day we apply our faith and look forward to even greater demonstrations of what He alone can do. So pray with us as we appoint a strong team to return to Namanhumbiri and bring more of His Kingdom!

29 January 2011

Yesterday Heidi and I arrived back home in Pemba, really dirty. Hot, perspiring, clothes soggy. Feet caked with dust and mud. We really looked the missionary part. Our creaking old Land Rover was loaded down. Our bench seats in back were crammed with Mozambican ministry buddies and a couple of short-term visitors, one happy family after pouring out all we could on yet another mud-hut village in the bush. Stiff and hot with piles of equipment and supplies stuffed between us, on our laps and under our legs, we had been talking nonstop on the long ride back about the sheer joy of serving the King among some of the richest people on the planet.

The Land Rover is slow and top-heavy, but utterly practical for us. Our big, heavy, flat roof rack easily handled all our tents, sleeping bags and other overnight gear. Its long-travel coil spring suspension takes us almost anywhere over deep ruts and mud. This is our missionary machine, and our teams drive lots more like it. Outreaches like this are the mainstay of our ministry, and we are used to our weekly routine. But what God does on these outreaches is anything but routine. In the face of all Mozambique's problems, deep revival has been taking root all over this northern province we live in now. The devil can accuse of all kinds of faults and weaknesses, but we just boast in all these (2 Cor. 12:9) and revel in the sheer power that God has displayed among us in

recent years. We are pleased with His workmanship, and extremely encouraged. It is obvious that this transcendent power belongs to God and does not come from us (2 Cor. 4:7).

Our outreach began Thursday, two days ago. First we sent out two big 4-ton flatbed trucks covered with canopies to carry the main group of our visitors and Mozambican ministers. They haul our sound system, projection screen, generator and whatever else we need. All our equipment is all banged up and dented, covered with dirt, but it keeps working. This is Africa! Our team is treated to the sublime experience of bouncing for hours over rough roads cooking in the heat sitting on the hard floor of these trucks, but it's a privilege not to be forgotten.

That group arrived late in the afternoon and right away put up a little tent village, so curious to rural Mozambicans not used to such conveniences. All they need is a grass mat! But our teams need privacy, so up they go. Then every time our intrepid revivalists hook up a generator, sound system and video projector, with a whole village excitedly flocking around anticipating another Iris night under the stars with God as the center of attention. It's hard anymore to find a village where we haven't already ministered. We've been coming to this village for three years now, and every time we keep adding to their understanding and experience of the gospel. With around two thousand churches among this one tribe, we are excited and awed by what has happened.

We arrived after dark. We could spot the glowing screen from far off, and the Jesus Film is showing yet again. We have memorized it now in fine detail, but the whole village was out again to see it once more, mesmerized and motionless. Many can't read, but they will never forget the film. It's just amazing how that sound track has been produced in so many languages, even in Makua here at the end of the earth....

It was really dark, but for the light of the projector. No moonlight, but millions of stars. These villages have no electricity, flashlights or batteries. Visitors looked spooky with their glowing LCD headlights nodding around, and startling flashes went off from

their ubiquitous pocket cameras.... But by now our African friends in this village know about our teams, and they are good sports. The end of the movie finally came, Jesus rose in the air, the disciples bowed in worship, and we turned on our floodlights, which really strained our generator.

Heidi jumped to life, her cute, rich voice ringing out in Makua and Portuguese, to the great delight of the people. Jesus is alive, He's here, and we can have the best night ever with our Perfect Savior! Preaching to crowds like this is always exhilarating! Our team energetically acted out the story of the Good Samaritan in a little drama, which makes a permanent impression in this culture. Heidi kept preaching, and like always here the people universally responded with shouts of joy, upraised hands and eager desire for more. It seems like everybody wants Jesus among these people, once considered so dark and unreachable. Most want the Holy Spirit! Most want prayer! Most want better hearts, more love and joy, more of His presence. We are not ashamed of enthusiasm; meetings are to us a time for emotional release, a gift from heaven, African-style! And the Holy Spirit backs us up....

Many wanted healing prayer, so our team spread out and laid hands on the sick. The needs were relatively minor, as we've already been to this village so many times. It's hard to find blind and deaf people anymore around here, a real problem(!).... But one man was healed completely who was hard of hearing in one ear, and totally deaf in the other. In recent years we've seen a stream of people healed of deafness, nearly every week!

The villagers were thrilled and encouraged once more by another visit by foreigners from far away. It always amazes them that people will travel so far and spend so much money to come and bless them. They know we come with no ulterior motive, and they feel loved. And they return the love by giving us their best, in the form of food after the meeting! That night we brought with us our usual spaghetti and tuna fish, but they trumped that easily with their gourmet bush chicken. Really, we've never tasted

better. And they explained how they do it. First, you have to kill the chicken. Very important. Then you pluck it 'n gut it, yes, yes. Toss it in the pot over the fire and stir: cha-cha-cha-cha.... Then when it goes schhhhhh, you know it's done. And the amazing part: they know how to add flavor. They come up with everything—credible! Tomatoes, onions, garlic, spices, on and on, until they come up with an unreal sauce that we can't get enough of! How do they get all these ingredients in the bush far away from Albertsons? They are so proud to explain. And we love it. They put out a whole big plate loaded with white mealie cakes, and we just launched into the chicken pot and kept dipping away into the rich reddish-brown yummy juice. They do it with goat too, and it's awesome! But eating like this is really rare, saved for absolutely the most special occasions.

Finally at midnight we got into our tents, zipped them up tight and tried to kill every last bug around us we could with the spray we always bring. I thought I'd read the Bible and write some on my iPad, but was way too tired. That was enough Kingdom work for one day.

The day starts early in the bush. At the first glimmer of dawn village kids excitedly crowded around our tents to see what might emerge. Sure enough, out came bedraggled foreigners with mussed up hair and makeup, trying to find toothbrushes and the outhouse (one fell in, but amazingly stayed on the outreach anyway). Soon we got collected enough to brew Starbucks coffee, and started serving tea and sugar with bread and jam to our little foreign and national family. Under our overhanging thatch roof, with our view of the lush, wild African landscape before us, we felt satisfied and at home. This is missions!

No village outreach is complete without meeting with the chief, agreeing to build another school and planning where to drill a well! So we did that next. Then we had morning church. We always want to make the most of our visits. Our Iris church buildings are usually just humble mud-and-stick huts with dirt floors and a tin roof. This

one was badly damaged by a wind storm, and half the roof was ripped off. No matter, a whole group of us gathered excitedly in our lowly bush tabernacle to enjoy the presence of God together. Spine-tingling African drumming is de rigueur for our meetings, with energy and dancing to match. Soon a flood of children poured in as well, and we didn't swat them off as so many do in Africa. We put them in front, and ministered to them too! We grown-ups have to learn to be like them, or we won't even get into the Kingdom.... And so our unlikely revival spot in the bush pulsed with the life of heaven so lacking in many staid Western churches....

We preached, making the gospel as clear as possible yet again, emphasizing always the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit that comes by faith in the power of the Cross. We worshiped and prayed. And the Holy Spirit fell on many visitors, missionaries, pastors and even the village chief himself. God graciously fills us with more love and joy than we can express, according to our faith and desire. May God have no competition in the bush of Africa; may He be the greatest pleasure in the lives of these saints around us, who trust so simply in their perfect Savior. We revel in His power to deliver us safely into His heavenly Kingdom, and be with us all the way....

A critical ingredient of our bush outreaches is discipleship time with a select group of local believers. This time Heidi sat outside under a tree with the village's leading Christians, by now her close friends, and taught quietly and unhurriedly from the scriptures. This is always an extremely valuable time, the highlight of an outreach in many ways. Earnestly and hungrily everyone was asking questions and seeking all the more understanding. Many have already been to our Bible school in Pemba, but they keep pressing on to the best yet. Our aim is far more than feeding or numbers, but to "present everyone perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

While Heidi was teaching, our team members spread out all over the village to visit the people in their huts and to pray for the sick. The villagers are so touched by these visits by teams with such love, and in turn visitors are deeply impacted by the reality of

extreme poverty—and also the faith and joy of people who have almost nothing but Jesus and each other. Their spirits well up with a generosity that could only come from heaven.

Our outreach was climaxed by a gourmet lunch, again proudly produced and offered to honor us to the max. How can we respond to such golden hearts? Yes, we are seeing revival, with a simplicity and purity that are breathtaking. How did we deserve the privilege of being here and witnessing God at work like this? Godliness with contentment is great gain, and our people are at peace, and yet at the very same time we have so much more to look forward to in the future. Those who have, Jesus said, will get even more. Mozambique is headed onward and upward!

On the way home we got another taste of revival in this land and what God can do if our focus is on His Son. We stopped at the government's local prison, where the Holy Spirit has been breaking out under the ministry of Ania Noster, a long-time Iris missionary and close friend, and Ezekiel, an ex-prisoner. The prison interior was grim, dark and claustrophobic, as expected. A few prisoners were still locked in their dirty, miserable confines, but most gathered in a long, narrow hallway with high, out-of-reach windows for security. On entry, though, we were greeted with shouts of praise, and then with one voice the whole prison reverberated with fervent worship. We joined them, standing and transfixed, as all these "dangerous offenders" sang their hearts out with joy, energy and enthusiasm to the King of Kings. Jesus was obviously now their real reason for living, the hope of their lives, the joy of their salvation. Rarely have we ever seen such powerful evidence of a change of spirit. The prisoners shook our hands, hugged us, laughed and cheered as if they were having an absolutely great day, which they were! And they seemingly could not stop worshipping. This is the road to transformation, the cutting edge of revival: the One who died and rose again on our behalf! He is the perfect personification of the love and power we all need, and only our faith in Him will overcome this world.

The atmosphere in that dark, horribly depressing place was extraordinary, under the circumstances. In the same way, His presence in our most difficult times is all and everything we need. Our hope in Him is secure, our future safely protected and reserved for us.... We may be in prisons of many kinds, but we have a Deliverer!

After the prison we drove the last twenty minutes back to Pemba, stopping just for fruit and snacks at a roadside stand. I was really itching and uncomfortable with so much stacked up on my lap. I could hardly move. What a full day. I couldn't wait for a shower and a cold Coke. And a good snooze. Another day in the life of Iris. And another day of eternal life! On we go to the best yet! In Jesus the best is always in the future....

5 June 2011

Our children could hardly sleep last night. Today is Children's Day! Our magnificent staff in each base in Mozambique have been working for months to prepare for this fabulous day. Each center has a giant "festa," a feast of feasts, to celebrate like never before Mozambique's national holiday, Children's Day! Presents, food, dancing, games, singing, worship, love and prayer—all to rejoice at the life Jesus has brought to our revival center, our Village of Joy in Pemba! He has done great things among us, and we are thrilled that He has chosen us to participate in what He is doing!

Heidi and I get up early. Today we have to look and be our best! Cameras will be everywhere, and our kids are expecting a lot of attention! We charge down to the center in our old, rattling, beat-up Land Rovers, still running strong, and our whole property is pulsing with energy. It's a perfect day. The sky is clear and blue, the nearby ocean peaceful, the temperature just right. Everybody has a job to do. Our kitchen workers have been up all night preparing chicken for more than four thousand people. Others have been painting and decorating rooms, wrapping presents, dressing kids, getting everything in order.

Now comes the time to shower love on each individual treasure Jesus has brought us. We start with our baby house. Every child gets a gift bag, huge hugs and a lot of play time as each present is pulled out with big, excited eyes and grins. Many of these babies came to us ragged, skinny, starving and dying of malnutrition, but now we bounce their chubby bodies on our knees in their cute outfits and marvel at their transformation.

We keep moving through our dorm rooms, going to older children, starting with boys. Each room is neat, cute and comfy, decorated with flowers, balloons and streamers, and walls painted with fun murals and scripture verses. What a contrast with the huts, streets and slums these children came from! We are so proud of our staff that spent so much time shopping carefully for each age group. Mama Heidi spends a long time with every single boy, making sure each one feels ultra-loved. All our missionaries, visiting teams, mission school students and Mozambican staff are absolutely pouring themselves out on the children on this their most special day.

Time for lunch! Only today we have a mega-production. We've invited thousands of village children from our surrounding community—the poorest of the poor we could find, who have never had such a feast. Lines have formed clear across our big property, and we know that feeding them will take all day. This is exciting! A feast here can mean only one thing: pieces of juicy barbecued chicken with Cokes and all the rice and coleslaw anyone can eat—a super-rare treat for most Mozambicans. Our dining room is such a scene. Foreigners and Africans of every age are all over the benches and floor. What a chaotic, wonderful mess. Bottles, scraps and plates are everywhere as we try to keep cleaning up. The kitchen assembly line is pumping out piles of yummy food hour after hour. In a poor, hungry nation, this is heaven on earth!

In the middle of this culinary extravaganza a group of our younger girls add rich African cultural flavor with dance productions they have been practicing for weeks. The drumming, the rhythm, the flashing, sparkling energy ignited before us all contribute to

our atmosphere of excited celebration. These children are alive, healthy, thrilled and full of life and hope! What a spectacle and treat for all our staff and visitors!

After lunch Heidi and I visit our older boys, and then our girls, one room at a time. They've been waiting patiently most of the day, and now we give them individual attention. We are joyfully struck by the difference in outlook these youth have since they first arrived at Iris. A few years ago, when asked about their dreams and aspirations, all they could imagine was simply enough food to eat, some clothes and maybe a decent place to live. Now they are brimming with positive ambition! What do they want to become? A doctor, an engineer, a pilot, a pastor, a teacher, an evangelist, a missionary.... The answers flow with eyes bright and smiles wide. Mozambique is being transformed, one young life at a time!!!

This one day might seem like just a brief, relatively insignificant and almost frivolous moment of time in our long history of struggling for the gospel in this poor land, but it is in fact a vivid portrait of what God has done among us. The love of God has reached down into the lives of the least of these in the land and brought them hope and a future, both in this life and the life to come. They have been rescued from darkness and brought into His marvelous light, and we are seeing His love manifested in countless real and practical ways. Right before our eyes we are witnessing the fruit of our years in Mozambique, and we know that this fruit will last.

We are encouraged! God who has brought us this far will continue to reveal Himself and His ways in the far corners of the earth to the hungry and humble. Truly He has given us a down payment and a guarantee of what is to come in the next life, and so the gospel marches on by His grace.

7 September 2011

We are in Africa among the poorest of the poor because we love seeing what our perfect Savior can do! For example, here's Elaina, a fifteen-year-old when she was

brought to our Iris base in Yei, Sudan, by the UN. She escaped to the Sudanese border after she had been abducted and brutalized by the LRA in the jungles of DR Congo. She was tortured, saw people killed in front of her and was left for days tied to trees. When she arrived she could barely sit up, had no use of either hand, scars all over her body and a faraway look of fear and pain in her eyes.

I was with Michele Perry and the rest of our Iris family in Yei right after Elaina came. A few days later we caught her relaxed and happy, laughing with her new friends around her.¹ Two months later she was back with her family in Aba, DR Congo, healed and restored in Jesus with nearly full strength back in her hands. One by one we keep seeing victims of Satan's cruelty brought back to life, healed inside and out, a picture of the joy of Jesus. If there is hope in Jesus for Elaina, there is hope for anyone, anywhere!

Jesus has been busy in Yei, as He has been everywhere in our Iris world. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses! Around the time of my last visit to Yei our Iris Revival School students reported in a few days this sampling:

VISITATION: Two of our students went to visit one of our neighbors, a Catholic man. Everyone in his family was seriously sick. God gave him a dream the night before that two men would come to pray and he saw Jesus coming with them. Next day our students turn up. The man is beside himself that strangers would come and pray when his church would not. Everyone was healed.

PRISON: The officials have been asking for prayer too. Our team prayed over each room because of evil tormenting spirits and the demons left. Many prisoners came forward to be released from the pains in their bodies. When they chose forgiveness these pains left. Prayed for one man who was in pain all over his body. He had been in prison for 6 years falsely accused he says. The moment he chose to forgive his accuser the pain left with prayer.

1. Photo available at <http://www.irisglobal.org/nlimages/Elaina.jpg>.

HOSPITAL: God is healing so many people, the hospital which was full the last 3-4 weeks is now almost empty. There were very few sick people left to pray for. The nurses have been thanking our teams and asking not only for prayer but for teaching to learn how to pray for their patients!

There was a little 10-year-old girl stabbed in the back of the brain by an SPLA bayonet. Her whole body was seizing violently, eyes rolled back in her head, screaming in pain and the team prayed peace. She grew still immediately. John Sebit took the witchcraft charms from her mother and the girl began to scream again. John got face to face with her and told her to repeat a prayer of choosing Jesus after him. SHE DID! Stabbed in the brain and then suddenly lucid and able to focus and pray out loud. She is resting well.

One woman was laying lifeless in the wards on the floor. She wanted to die and took poison that left her blind, deaf, mute and unable to talk or walk. John stops with the team and prays for her. Then they move on to pray for a few more cases. On his way out of the ward, he runs into her: seeing, walking, hearing, she introduces herself as Rose.

One young boy had recently returned with his family from Khartoum in fear of the referendum. He fell out of a tree he was climbing and was left paralyzed and in pain, his legs twisted beneath him. Our students pray for him—his pain leaves, his legs straighten. They stand him up and he walks!

POLICE TRAINING: About a month ago we took notice of about 500 police officers in training just near to our compound. It turns out they are coming from all over our state. One of our team members was heavily burdened for them and began to pray. One day we were driving by and there was an overwhelming sense to stop. So we did and one of our key leaders, John, jumped out and went and met the lead commander. He basically said, where have you been? We have needed someone to tell us what to do with all the demonic attacks. They invited us to come back and share with all of the students.

So we took our Revival School team and preached there. 495 of the 500 decided to follow Jesus, and we will be baptizing them all in our local, all-purpose community pond!

Our people movement is concentrated in Mozambique, and here we have already seen more of the power of God than we ever dreamed we would in this life. We have received more than we could have asked or thought. Yet Jesus keeps flooding us with more, and there is no limit! God pours out His Spirit without measure! And so we press on to what lies ahead....

This baby boy, blind from birth with eyes white and clouded over, was healed in a flash before many hundreds of Mozambicans, missions school students and visitors.² This took place in a cement floor, tin roof Iris church in Mieze, near Pemba, where we now have a thriving community of believers who, in their mud huts, have been experiencing a stream of healing miracles these past few years. There we have a school, a children's home and a church bursting with Africans thrilled with their perfect Savior! This is a resting place for the Holy Spirit, who loves to show up there with great power and joy!

Our bases in Pemba keep growing, hosting a community church for thousands, a Bible school, a missions school, a children's center, a primary school and housing for hundreds of missionaries, students, staff and visitors. We are inundated with foreigners from dozens of countries, which is just what the Holy Spirit ordered, and hearts from around the world are being shaped for ministry to the poor. We are in a Kingdom vortex of supernatural activity, a sovereign work of God that sweeps us along in refreshing wonder and awe.

Of course we are also tested and refined to the uttermost. Wherever God is active there are responses and reactions of all kinds, and some fail the test and fall by the wayside. Spiritually we are deep in enemy territory, sustaining injuries and casualties, and keep getting threatened with our ministry's annihilation. But our demise is greatly

2. Photo available at http://www.irisglobal.org/nlimages/IMG_8940.jpg.

exaggerated, and we move from glory to glory as we learn through our hardships to trust God, who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:8–11).

The dead are still raised, the lost are still saved, the hungry are fed, the lonely are in families, the simple are taught, the poor and hopeless dream dreams, and love, peace and joy increasingly reign. All this is His workmanship, and He is able to finish what He began. He is perfect, and will perfect us!

Our Bible school for bush pastors remains a joy to us. Our students come to us for three months out of every year for three or four years, and by then they are truly immersed both in the Word and the Spirit. And then we have our fifth-year students, whom we call our “MMs”—Mozambican missionaries! These are humble, mature, solid, fervent carriers of the gospel, God’s answer for this country, and their testimonies are a thrill to hear. Joy, visitations, healings, salvations, transformations of all kinds flow from them. We are so proud of them; they should be teaching our foreigners, including us! Here is one of our heroes, Pastor Adriano, who has been used along with many others to raise the dead.³

Our school of missions in Pemba, called Harvest School, runs twice a year for ten weeks at a time, and each time results in an intensely close, joyful, filled-up, free and released family of potential missionaries eager to lay their lives down for love. We pray for power to accommodate and respond to all the interest and hunger coming from around the world. The place to learn missions is on the mission field, where every day we can put into practice what Jesus puts in our hearts. May He call many from this rich pool of lives to help us finish the task Jesus has given us of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace in the neediest places we can find around the world.

3. Photo available at http://www.irisglobal.org/nlimages/IMG_2247.jpg.

24 November 2011

Written by my sister, Lorena Wood:

Happy Thanksgiving! What an incredible day here in Mozambique! Yesterday about eighty people consisting of Harvest School students, missionaries, visitors from a dozen nations and Mozambican Bible school students from six provinces all headed out to evangelize an unreached people group in a village called Quissanga da Praia. Some of us went by boat, some by land.

This village represents a syncretistic people of another faith that has never had a Christian church. The Mwani people are typically closed to the gospel, but when they saw a deaf man healed last night after viewing the Jesus Film, thirty-six of them raised their hands to accept Jesus as their Savior. This morning their decision to follow Christ proved strong as they all came back to give us their names and be put on a list. Four believers through PIH Iris now live in this village who had become Christians in other districts, but have returned now to their home village. One has even attended the first year of Bible school at Iris in Pemba. They have been crying out to God for more believers and meeting on their own as a little home church. Now they are thrilled to have thirty-six new brothers and sisters! Thank you, Jesus, for our new family members among this “unreached” people group!

Our Thanksgiving story gets even better. This morning we began our day with coffee and bread, feeding all the hungry village children surrounding our camp as well. After eating and worshipping Jesus together at the crack of dawn, we honored the chief. Many of the team members lined up to bless him, thanking him for his help and praying for him and his family. We gave gifts of solar Bibles and sewn bags made by our widows from church. The chief received this well, but Abdul Alah was no ordinary chief. Later we found out he was the head imam of the village and the head imam of the largest

mosque in this whole surrounding area. Yet he granted us permission to come set up our tents in his backyard!

As the morning progressed, Heidi asked if we could buy some land to build a church and a school for literacy. At first Abdul said, “No,” being pressured by all the other imams and witch doctors from the village. There had never been a Christian presence in that village, and they didn’t want to start one now! But Jesus had other plans. One of the four believers in the village bravely came forward and offered to sell us some of their land. (Everyone else was too afraid to sell to us.) The next hurdle was the chief. Miraculously, he changed his mind! Within a few hours, he signed the deed to the land. We now have property and permission from the head imam of Quissanga da Praia to build a Christian church for the first time in history among this unreached people group.

During this amazing progression of events, team members headed out in small groups to visit the neighboring families in their huts. Jesus touched many lives on this glorious Thanksgiving Day. Here is a short story given by two team members as they visited one of these families. Responding to a call by a nearby woman, Kelly and Juliana entered the mud hut. Two ladies sat on their dirt floor, one unable to move and in great pain, and the other deaf and blind. Juliana, a visitor from Brazil, breached the language barrier with her Portuguese and began praying. Kelly joined in and soon the deaf and blind lady said she could see and hear a little. Encouraged, the team member moved on to pray for the second lady who was not only immobile, but also very sad in spirit. As they began praying for her, the deaf and blind lady started screaming and jumping for joy! “I can see! I can hear! I am completely healed!” The crippled lady, now filled with faith, began shaking! Within minutes, she too was up and dancing around the room! Her sadness had changed to joy. Needless to say, these ladies progressed to tell everyone around them about what Jesus had just done. Though Muslims from birth, they now knew the power and love of Jesus for the first time. This is just one of the amazing stories from our morning of house visitations on this amazing Thanksgiving Day.

After a five-hour boat ride home, our day was not over. This evening all our Iris kids, three hundred Harvest School students, two hundred Mozambican Bible school students, children and church members from our Mieze base, and all the missionaries from our Pemba base enjoyed an incredible Thanksgiving dinner provided by “Tiny” and his friends at Halliburton as a contribution by the Houston oil company which is operating in the Pemba area. Wow, thank you, Jesus. Words really can’t describe the incredible joy we have in serving you each day, but especially this special Thanksgiving Day!

21 December 2011

It’s Christmas! Even in the squelching heat, we revel in beauty all around. Ocean ripples arrive softly on the shore as the tide rises. Fishermen glide by, paddling their dugouts lazily. Women are wading on the reefs, gathering long nets. Children are racing, flipping and diving on the beach. The slight breeze is so pleasant and welcome. Protected and refreshed under spreading shade trees, we look out over a vista that could only have been designed by God. All seems quiet, peaceful, slow—vintage Africa.

Last night we had our staff Christmas party on our porch. Warm, pulsing Christmas lights trimming our thatch roof cast a dim, colorful glow on our many faces, white and black. Our scrawny, pitiful African pine tree was lit up too, adding to an improbable but perfect atmosphere in the darkening, sultry evening. For no practical reason we dressed up and looked so uncharacteristically sharp and beautiful we could hardly recognize each other. But here in this once-pagan land we gathered to enjoy His presence together once more and celebrate the arrival of our Perfect Savior two thousand years ago. And so deep in “faraway” Africa Christmas carols rose to heaven as a sweet, fragrant offering to our God for His gracious, unfathomable kindness toward us who believe.

We were tired. We have had such a challenging month/year. So many needs and desperate, desperate requests/demands. So many children need love, presents and more attention. We are constantly asked for housing, transportation, phones, food and even airfare. And we have had almost daily major events. Birthdays, goodbye parties, growing up ceremonies, graduations, outreaches, home meetings, baptisms, prayer meetings, Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas celebrations for workers and children—every day something different. All this in addition to regular Bible school and Harvest school classes, church meetings and dealing with personal issues and crises among our people and leaders. We have been working! And loving....

But we were happy. Jesus has given us so much fruit. Testimonies abound. We would not trade our lives here for anything. He is worth it all, and every person is priceless. So we sang and danced and laughed and ate—all the chicken and rice we could hold, and then all the Christmas desserts we could get down after that. Our senior staff is such a huge, composite gang now, almost eighty of us, including young and old missionaries, grown-up Mozambican sons and daughters from our early years in Maputo, young leaders rising up, local pastors, what a mix. Relaxed and unstressed, we just enjoyed Christmas together. We read the nativity story. We gave thanks and worshiped. We gave presents. We jumped and shouted. We hugged, blessed and prayed for each other. We love what God has done, and we kept reminding each other of all the miraculous that has happened this year.

This is Fernando, one of our teenagers, a normal, likable kid who has been with us for a long time.⁴ We have a homegroup for our youth every Monday night, and recently at one of these meetings Fernando got a taste of heaven! Some background here. Heidi and I were not originally “children people.” But we learned from my grandfather H.A. Baker, who wrote *Visions Beyond the Veil*, to look for revival among “the least of these,” poor,

4. Photo available at http://www.irisglobal.org/nlimages/IMG_2946.jpg.

helpless, abandoned children. And so we came to Mozambique hungry for a continuation of that outpouring described in *Visions*. Many have had visions during these sixteen years since, but Fernando had one that is taking us even closer to the sequel we are after.

The meeting started with unusually deep prayer and worship. The Holy Spirit fell on some, and one of the older youth began prophesying spontaneously that our kids would have dreams and visions, and encounters with God. While we read from H. A.'s book, Fernando was filled with the Spirit. He got up, walked around with his eyes closed, and was talking to thin air—but all very coherently. Clearly he was seeing and hearing things that we were not. Immediately we realized he was in a vision! We could ask him questions and he would respond, but at the same time he was talking to Jesus and to angels, shaking their hands—which we saw him act out, and we heard his responses. Just like *Visions Beyond the Veil*.

To mention a few things we learned later, God spoke to him out of Proverbs 7 about following His commandments. He saw angels all around. There were flowers that never decay, houses, a river-fountain and lights with lots of colors—yellow, red, green, blue—lots of blue. He saw fire over people's heads. He saw the hand of God stretched out to help him up a ladder to a higher place where he saw a big gate, and he was given a key. He opened it, and there were many more entryways ahead. He was most moved when at one point he saw Jesus' hands, which had holes in them from the crucifixion.

He came out of the vision and we gathered around to hear more. And then he went back into another vision, this time of the healing blood of Jesus, and a place full of joy and the Holy Spirit where all can receive love and knowledge. We enter by a straight path that does not turn, and we cannot leave it. Then Fernando started giving thanks and praising God for His might, His power, His extended hand, all His wonders, and a spontaneous song sprang up from his heart.

Our entire base was deeply stirred after this meeting. We realize we are on course to receive the desire of our hearts, the greatest down payment on heaven we have heard

of yet! “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:1–2). “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

Fiery, laid-down love! Intense presence! The explosive joy of the Lord! Power and energy! Passion for the lost! Jesus is here! God is in the room! Church can begin! We love our joint Bible School/Harvest School graduations, always the climax of ten weeks of blending Word and Spirit in the context of on-the-ground missions. Twice a year we bring in new students and pastors from the remotest bush, and also eager students from nations around the world who are zealous for missions and want to be as immersed in God as possible. The hungry will be fed! We bring in our favorite speakers, and then pour everything we have into every heart and mind. We love, laugh and think hard, get as filled up as possible, and then head for our local villages and the “bush-bush” to seek and save the lost among some of the most forgotten people on earth.

As much as possible we bring cultures together, black and white, east and west, rich and poor. We are a cross-section of the Body of Christ, and want to see it function as it should, each member contributing their gifts from God. We teach the Word to the limit of our ability as it becomes the Sword of the Spirit. We preach a living Savior whom we can find, meet and trust for everything. These schools are the foundation of our ministry, our chance to impart our core values and the relationship we have with our God. And we pray they will bear eternal fruit as many are called to long-term missions, satisfying the humble and poor in spirit wherever they are in the world. May we all pay the price, as with Paul we consider our lives worth nothing to us, if only we may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given us—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace (Acts 20:24).

Actual experience on the frontiers of missions in the African bush is the highlight of every session. In the last few years we have seen more than two thousand churches planted in this one province of Cabo Delgado. More spring up every week and we cannot keep count. Our “technique” is simple: all that counts is faith working through love (Gal. 5:6).

Every week we send truckloads of leaders, students and our own children to three villages. So many have opened up to the Lord that we are now often welcomed excitedly as we come back to love and encourage the people further. It is glorious to see the Kingdom spreading through the isolated and forgotten countryside of this land as village by village the power and love of our King is becoming known.

No carpets and air-conditioned sanctuaries here. We meet outside in the dirt and in the dark with hundreds and even thousands of villagers. In wind, dust, heat and rain they stand in their rags for hours, absorbing all they can. There is almost no resistance to the gospel in this environment. Everyone wants Jesus when they feel His love through us all and see what only He can do. Of course they will need much more teaching, and more sanctification by the Spirit. But it is thrilling to see great crowds jumping and shouting “Yes!” to Jesus and His gifts. Every time our teams spread out and pray for everyone possible, resulting in tremendous testimonies. And in the morning we serve food for everyone, make friends, honor the chiefs, visit houses and families, pray for the sick, disciple the elders, preach and teach in simple mud churches, and just keep pouring out all we have.

This is Antonio, a 12-year-old known to his whole village as a deaf-mute since he was very young.⁵ Here he is, happy and healed, to the joyful excitement of everyone around. Almost every week the deaf are healed, and as a result this time three local chiefs came to Jesus acknowledging that He is Lord. They opened the whole area to us, welcoming our desire and efforts to bring more teaching, ministry and practical help of

5. Photo available at http://www.irisglobal.org/nlimages/IMG_2672.jpg.

all kinds. For months since our last major newsletter we have seen this kind of breakthrough in village after village, invigorating us with fresh energy and appetite to see God do even more in the future.

The Kingdom of God is holistic. We don't just preach heaven, but we prove the love of God by drilling wells, building simple churches and schools, supplying teachers, providing for orphans and abandoned women—doing whatever we can with what we have. These villages are primitive almost beyond belief to many Westerners, and desperately need help and development of every kind.

We love adorning the gospel with love and good works that people can enjoy and appreciate here and now. We revel in all the transformation that we can achieve in the Lord that gives the poor more of a taste of heaven. We love material blessings that come from the good hand of the Father. We love to feed the hungry, set the lonely in families, teach the unlearned and bring hope and a future to the destitute.

But most of all we proclaim Jesus. He is our salvation, our prize, our reward, our inheritance, our destination, our motivation, our joy, wisdom and sanctification—and absolutely everything else we need, now and forever. All His grace and power flow to us through the Cross and no other way. We say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Ps. 73:25).

We are glad to be known as social workers and humanitarians, and to have a reputation for doing good. But all is in vain if we do not bring to the people faith in our God and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to be known by His Name, first and foremost. And our Christmas is spectacular because He is with us!

March 30, 2012

Thursday afternoon, February 16! Time for outreach again! We do this every week! And we take all our visitors, ready or not, on the Iris version of an African bush safari, hunting for souls and the glory of God.

Packing starts early in the day. Tents, sleeping bags, headlamps, bug spray, water bottles, toilet paper, cameras, sandals, lots of deodorant(!).... All the essentials. And it all goes on top of our Land Rovers, which sway dangerously under heavy loads. So fun.

By 5 o'clock we are almost ready to head out of town to our chosen village an hour away. Our advance team has already gone on a big flatbed truck to set up sound and the Jesus Film. Everything is going smoothly. Exciting! What an operation. We are professionals!

Heidi and I take separate Land Rovers. She goes off to get gas and snacks for the trip, jammed full of visitors and kids all singing and thrilled. But then back at the base I get a call. It's the advance team. It's pouring rain where they are, and their big truck is hopelessly stuck in deep mud halfway to the village. They can't make it. Amazing that they are in cellphone range. Quick! We need plan B!

"Get the church sound system!" I'm told. But we've never taken it to the bush to get all beat up before. Our other sound systems are in repair, veterans and victims of previous Iris outreaches. Nobody makes anything Iris can't break. "Just get it!!" Okay, our boys haul out the heavy speakers and amp rack. But they are way too big for my short LR Defender 90 truck and all its stuff. Plan C. "Go home! There are small speakers, a media player and a video projector in your office we put there that Joe used in his plane!" But no screen. "Get a sheet! Find some poles! Quick, quick!" Race, race, drive, drive. It's so late, and already dark. It's a two-hour film. But no generator! Whoa! "Buy one!" Zoom. Shell out exorbitant dough at a local shop. A visiting photographer buys it for us out of sheer goodness.

Get another phone call. Wow. For some reason the torrential downpour stopped! The big truck is out of the mud and already at the outreach. The sky is clear, the Jesus Film is playing. All that fuss for nothing.... Joy, joy!!

Okay, down the road we go, later than ever. This will be great. Thump, thump, thump. My steering wheel is vibrating. Something underneath is not sounding right at all.

Very strange. Everyone is listening carefully. Heidi is racing ahead, as usual, and I'm trying to keep up with a very shaky truck. Something is wrong with a wheel, but how fast can I go safely anyway? I don't know where the village is, and if I lose Heidi, it's all over with. Cellphone coverage on the main highway is off and on, but I get Heidi and she stops for us.

The steel belt on my right front tire has broken apart, but somehow the tire hasn't blown yet and we are riding on plain rubber. But it's late, we have visitors, and the outreach must go on!! Okay, drive slowly at 30 mph and we thump and shake all the way to the village. Success!!

It's actually a very cool outreach. The crowd listened carefully to the gospel after the film. Practically everybody wanted Jesus, again. Lots of prayer from our team. Healings. One old deaf-mute, well-known to the village, was healed, hearing and repeating phrases over the mike! Fantastic! Another village soaking up the love and power of our Perfect Savior!

We pray for people until late. Our little tent city is set up in a dirt courtyard. Hundreds of kids watch with huge curiosity as we funny foreigners establish our idea of basic, essential civilization. That would include a huge pot of spaghetti and tuna fish warmed over a wood fire that we share with many Mozambicans. We add mayonnaise to every plateful, but no forks and spoons needed here. This is Africa.

The night is hot and the ground is hard. We just soak, turn and baste in our perspiration. But we have more than grass mats, and some of us even brought pillows! The chickens and kids wake up at 4:00 a.m., and that's it for sleep. Soon comes dawn and Starbucks coffee—Heidi's specialty. The bathroom is a reed fence sort of shielding us over a pit latrine. Our team produces toothbrushes, girls find hair brushes, and we start making tea and jam sandwiches for everybody, village moms and kids included.

But this is a big day and we have to get started early. First we honor the local chiefs. Each of our team sits low before them and spends time building friendship, explaining our backgrounds, our purpose in coming and our desires for the people. And the chiefs respond to each with solemn, dignified grace. They open their people to us and our ministry wholeheartedly. They want Jesus to reign and bless their land. The urge us to return, and they are profoundly grateful for our visits, love and help. Yes, their territory is ours, and they want to learn and grow in God.

Word of the deaf-mute's healing last night reaches the imam at the local mosque, and he arrives in his robes and hat to pay his respects and declare with us that Jesus is Lord! He is full of joy to hear of His miraculous power, and there is no tension at all.

The morning continues....

We want to make the most of this overnight visit. We've been here before, and the village already has an Iris mud hut church, like nearly every village within a few hours' drive of Pemba. But we aren't there often, and the people need encouragement, friendship, input, ministry of all kinds.

And they need real church weddings before God and the people. Many couples in our churches have already been together for years by common law and village tradition. They cannot manage a civil ceremony or afford the expected feasting of a "real" wedding in the big city, but now that they know Jesus they want us to marry them. So today we marry three couples in their dim church hut. Kids crowd all around, eyes peek in through every window, the celebration is wild, dust is kicked up and thick in the air, and we are thrilled that the love of God is being poured into these covenant relationships.

Now we visit people in their own homes, simple huts with dirt floors, rope beds, mats and a cooking pot—and not much else. We pray with each family and their sick as everyone from giggling, beaming kids to peaceful, smiling, leather-faced grandmothers crowd around us with eager affection and hunger for God. It takes time, but these people have lots of it, and we have learned to stop for the least of these. God is in no hurry.

Next, a baptism for new believers! Our people do not hesitate to declare their faith openly! But where to baptize? Many villages are hours away by foot from a water supply, a pond, a stream, or often just a muddy trickle. And now there is just such a water hole nearby, a half-hour hike. Single file we tramp through the tall brush and assemble around a pitiful, tiny pool in a pit between some rocks. It's not the Jordan River, but it's glorious. The water is so shallow we use cups to douse people to make sure it works, ha. We get them wet and soaked, and we all shout with joy and praise as each comes up out of baptism, hands lifted to God and thrilled by new life. The African sky overhead is deep, clean and richest blue. Brilliant clouds are strewn by the master Artist. We are surrounded by the wild, God's country. Here in this unknown, insignificant spot on earth we have a down payment on heaven as angels rejoice over each soul won forever.

And the afternoon....

It's hard to leave. The villagers cannot get enough of our visit. And we have so many plans for them, as we do for each village we reach. Our vision is for village sponsorships, not just for individuals. We do aim for transformation, with schools, literacy programs, health care, better farming methods and tools, so many things. But all means nothing without Jesus, who sustains us and is our life and delight....

On the way back to Pemba we stop at the Mieze prison, a habit we have formed. It is a stunning shock for visitors to discover that the Holy Spirit has invaded this grim, dirty, crowded, claustrophobic, Mozambican idea of confinement. The prisoners are thrilled again by our visit. Most of them are let out into a long, very narrow and dark hallway to worship with us. They greet us excitedly, grinning with life. Now nearly every prisoner is a believer with fresh hope and an excited outlook on the future, in spite of their sentence. And they sing! Richly and loudly their voices reverberate in the hall and up to heaven, all joined in love for their Perfect Savior. It's just amazing, spine-tingling, so moving. They want all of the Holy Spirit they can get. Every time we visit we teach them more, and they listen intently. They are loved by God, sons of the King, with a

brilliant, eternal future that cannot be taken from them. Only the Holy Spirit can give them joy in such circumstances, and it is real, tested and proven. Jesus is glorified by such hearts and souls, and He will make up to them all their suffering. They are His workmanship!

Finally we are back in Pemba, tired, super dirty, and ready for showers and cold Cokes, the ultimate luxury here. We have poured out all we can, and given all we have with joy in our hearts. And now we rest, feeling very loved by our God and privileged beyond description to partake of His nature and do His work united with Him.... Next week will be even greater! Of the increase of His government there will be no end....

July 24, 2012

It's been a peaceful flight so far, flying at 10,500 feet westward toward Malawi from Pemba on our first long trip in our new Kodiak. The air is smooth, the sky cloudless. Our passengers are reading or dozing in relatively spacious comfort. We are covering a three-day road trip in two-and-a-half hours. We have been praying and waiting for trips like this for years. Now all of east Africa is reasonably accessible to us, and even the rest of Africa. We can take a small missions team, sound equipment, a generator and basically all we need to hold open-air "bush conferences" in the most remote areas of the continent that we could never reach by road or commercial airlines.

But today we are flying to a well-established Iris base in Bangula, down in the southern tip of Malawi. Years ago we arrived at Bangula's old abandoned airstrip on an exploratory trip in our little Cessna 206. The runway was covered with tall grass, ant hills and rubble, but we had it cleared off and the government gave us the use of it. And so we bought property right on the edge of the runway, and it became one of our earliest Iris bases, now a model ministry directed by our stellar missionaries, David and Joanna Morrison from Canada.

The yawning wilderness of Africa slides benignly beneath us, its isolated huts and occasional footpaths hidden from our lofty vantage point in the sky. The whole continent seems uninhabited, the province of natural grandeur, unspoiled vistas, crowned by untamed vastness. And yet we know that Africa is not called the dark continent for nothing. In all that magnificence below there are people, millions of them, who for centuries, even millennia, have been held under the cruel heel of the evil one. But God in His love and wisdom is changing that, and we live to partake of His nature and be part of His plan of salvation for Africa!

An airplane for me is a cathedral of prayer in the sky. My meditations and interactions with Him in the clouds and heights are undisturbed by the tumult and clashing of problems on the ground. But now we are free in our cozy aerial cocoon to contemplate with our God and Lover what is to come in the lives of the incomprehensibly poor in southern Malawi. We delight in our God, but we do not live for bare pleasure. We have come to Africa to face directly the sufferings of this land.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? (2 Cor. 2:14–16)?

We are here to improve the physical lives of the poor in every way possible, and thereby demonstrate what love looks like. But ultimately we are here to save souls. We are here to rescue the perishing and bring them eternal life. We bring a Kingdom not made with hands, not one that we can see, but a never-ending Kingdom that is within us, a Kingdom of love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We live for another life, in another place, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. We are here to bring Jesus our Perfect Savior to Africa, and to set its sights on Him and eternity!

I could fly forever in my spiritual world. But Chileka airport at Blantyre is coming up, and we need to descend. Winter fires have filled the usually pristine skies

with smoke, and it seems we are descending blindly through thick white haze. But our computer map, GPS and autopilot are in control, and soon we have runway 28 in sight. On the ground we rush through formalities, needing to get to Bangula by sunset.

Back in the plane we lift off, turn gently around a nearby peak and head south, just clearing the green hills that surround Blantyre. Now we are flying low-level, skimming houses and farm plots that dot the landscape just below us. This is flying in Africa at its best, seeing the big picture and yet staying down where the people are and taking in their world. At this altitude the ground moves quickly by, and flying seems so much faster and more amazing.

Bangula is several thousand feet lower than Blantyre, past a ridge down on a flat plain by a swampy river filled with crocodiles. It is almost intolerably hot in summer, but this is smokey winter, mercifully cooler, and we don't miss air conditioning in our plane. In all the haze we don't see our dirt runway until we're just a few miles away. It's crooked, and criss-crossed with bicycle, foot and goat paths. Not an international airport. The sun sets in five minutes, and it's already glowing red on the horizon. It's getting dark. We circle the field to check it out and alert everyone on the ground. We see kids and animals moving out of the way. A truck is going down the runway to clear it off. Hundreds of excited, expectant spectators have lined the runway's edges to see the new Iris bird land. They have poured in from villages all around, and pastors have come representing hundreds of Iris churches in Malawi. This is a big event!

We coast to a stop before the crowd. Curious, excited kids press forward, kept in check by our hired guards. Our team spills out of the plane, exhilarated by the trip and our new environment, reached so easily. Heidi and I haven't been here in a long time, and now we are eager to make the most of our visit. What a change our plane has made!

For the next three days we immerse ourselves in a good, old-fashioned Iris bush conference, made worthwhile only because God shows up! This base is relatively

developed. We don't have to set up the sound system, string lights, find water, dig latrines, pitch tents and start cooking for thousands. Our early days were much rougher! So much is already organized. Here Iris has amazing missionaries and national leaders, property, houses, schools, water tanks, satellite antennas, grass, trees, shade, refrigerators—amazing! We settle into our rooms, pray and head for the first night meeting....

An outdoor Iris conference in Africa is a cultural phenomenon! As we approach we can see clouds of dust rising in the spotlights. Feet are pounding the dirt all over our bush arena as our Malawians worship as only Africans can! The worship team up on our simple cement stage is blazing with red-hot energy, rhythmically dancing up a storm to the music. Drenched with perspiration, they tirelessly radiate a spirit of fire and glory acting out what they are singing. Africans cannot stand still! They move! They express! They glow! They explode! They feel! The crowd is ballistic, all very normal for these meetings. Ha. If only the West could get this worked up! Our God is worthy!!!

The people come for a reason. They are desperate, and they have come to seek the only One who can help them. Their poverty is indescribable. So many are seriously sick. They have been battered by witchcraft, cultic churches, corrupt and immoral leaders, huge frustrations and disappointments, broken homes and a meager economy. Their living conditions and prospects for the future seem hopelessly bleak. But that's why we are here. We preach Good News, a perfect Savior, eternal hope, a Kingdom of love, peace and joy that cannot be taken away.

Over these days our speakers take turns and cover one subject after another. The people need so much teaching and understanding, as well as immediate, direct experience with God. We cover dwelling in God, connecting with Him, receiving gifts from Him, knowing and relating to Him, being His friend, imparting His love, peace and joy—all predicated on plain and simple repentance and faith in Jesus. Our team, pastors and leaders spread out through the crowds and minister to everyone they can.

We live for what only God can do, and we thrive on testimonies. People come away from these meetings with all kinds of reactions, but we treasure the pure and rich ones. We will travel anywhere for the sake of that white hot core of respondents to the gospel who just want to be close to Him, united with Him in perfect love. Jesus graciously heals people, filling them with His Spirit and loving them as they need to be loved. Outrageously glorious joy descends on some. Young children, deeply touched, sob in His weighty presence. Basically everybody affirms their salvation. Music modulates between wild energy and rich, melodic depth—all beautiful. Hope and power are being poured out. People are encouraged to resist the devil all the more in strength of faith, and to press forward to what lies ahead. They are poor in spirit, and know their utter need of Him. He will go with them back to their humble huts and bare surroundings and make them rich toward Him as they take hold of true life. Pastors gain strength and rejoice in their calling, determined to carry on as never before. This is a worthwhile trip....

It's Sunday afternoon now, and we have to go back to Pemba. A great crowd accompanies us to the plane and we load up. We roar down the 2,000-foot runway and pull up in a max performance climb-out, leaving a cloud of dust. We will remember this time, and be back for much more as Jesus continues to grant us all that we need to complete the task He has given to us of testifying to His incomparable grace....

That Bangula trip was our third outreach in our new Kodiak. Before that we flew north up the coast several times, covering an eight-hour road trip over terrible roads in fifty minutes. Each time God hugely blessed our efforts. Village chiefs are consistently opening their hearts wide to Jesus and the work of the Lord. They know we love them, and that we want their people to be blessed in every way, not only by eternal life, but with water wells, schools, construction, medicine—anything and everything that God puts in our hands to give them. We received government favor, were able to buy property,

encourage many bush pastors, introduce our teams to their leaders one-by-one and find many other ways into the hearts of their people.

And yes, many found Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. It seems at least several deaf people hear at every night outreach. One deaf-mute was healed and spent the whole next day hanging out with our missions team thrilled and talking! And then we prayed for one blind lady. Nothing happened at first, but when she went back to her hut, her eyes were opened, her room filled with bright light and two doves landed on her shoulders carrying flowers in their beaks! She went to her Muslim priest the next morning to ask what happened and what it meant. He told her she needed to go to church and ask the Christians. She beautifully came to Christ!

Each week now we can take the Kodiak to places far from Pemba, strengthen our churches and fuel the movement over huge areas like we used to do with our Cessna. Only now we can carry much more with increased speed, power, convenience and reliability. It truly is an amazing tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit, a gift straight from heaven through the supernatural generosity of our donors. We so look forward to writing more reports of how your giving has impacted our ministry.

We are intensely busy night and day with all that is happening here. We have hundreds of missions school students, another full Bible school, many visitors, teams and speakers, meetings all the time, new churches every week, a hospital and university in development, farm projects, a vocational school, another primary school and many other initiatives going on. We love our family atmosphere, our heavenly DNA of love that spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him! The gospel is perfect! Our God is worthy!

The preceding chapters have laid out the rationale and application of the “core values” endemic to our ministry. Chapter six now offers a summary of this project, with

reflections on what was learned and what remains to be learned in our service and love for Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project has taken an unusual course, in that it aims to contribute toward training for ministry not through an experimental exercise in a very exclusive, specific ministry activity, but making every effort to determine what is the cleanest, most incisive cutting edge of ministry and missions, the very heart and core of the life of ministry that affects every ministry activity. We have found that in facing the extreme needs of the poor and uneducated of Africa, more mental effort, revelation and sensitivity are required than ever to reduce the gospel to its simplest and most effective form. We are always asking, What do the people need most? What exactly do they most need to hear now? How can we make the Good News most understood? What are we asking God to do in our ministry? What is the essence of salvation and life in God? What do we have to offer? How can we avoid missing out on what is possible? How can we deliver the whole counsel of God to an illiterate and isolated people? In short, how can we deliver God Himself to the people? How can we bring in His presence? How can God become the total answer through our ministry? How can we avoid diluting the Good News in any way?

In the Lord we developed a desire to minister to the poorest of the poor and the most desperate of the desperate, and gravitated to Africa knowing specifically that if the gospel could be proven in that crucible, it would hold true for anyone anywhere. We were after the glory of God. We were after tasting the powers of the age to come. We were after the largest down payment on heaven we could experience. We were desperately fervent about not missing out on anything that we could possibly experience in God in this life. We wanted no regrets on Judgment Day, no lessening of our eternal reward, no

losing out in the next life because we tried to keep anything in this life. We wanted the purest possible experience of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, a true fulfillment of the Great Commandment. We believed in seeking revival without limits, running the race to win and fully coming alive.

The Glory of God

What strikes us most in our long history of ministry is that we as human beings invariably and drastically underestimate God and His power and glory. Our dim vision and remaining sinful nature still cause us to fall short of comprehending and apprehending God to the fullest extent possible. Jesus constantly proves Himself better than we think. As we continue to experience more of Him, we are astounded by our previous dullness and lack of faith. We daily, constantly repent of our past misjudgments. Our life-force consists of anticipating even more revelation of God's glory. We meditate continually on His greatness.

And so we learn that our ambition is to enter into that glory, to stay in heavenly places while in this life, to taste and drink of the nature of that glory, and experience the climax of that glory: ultimate relationship with the King! All power, understanding, authority and anointing flow from being connected and united with our all-glorious God. Our fire and zeal derive from knowing there is no limit to the glory of God, and every day can be more extraordinarily glorious in Him than the previous.

We are also struck by the fundamental understanding that no power on earth can separate us from that glory. Our salvation is perfect and complete. Nothing can keep us from glorying in Christ Jesus to our hearts' content. It is that completely open door to perfect life in God that keeps us moving forward with unlimited motivation to preach the Good News to the poor.

Our Weaknesses

The corollary to our apprehension of the glory of God is our knowledge of our own weaknesses. Our history in Iris has humbled and broken us to the uttermost. We have never been more conscious of our own weaknesses, inabilities and failures. Truly we stay low and minister in fear and trembling. We have absolutely nothing to recommend ourselves in view of the surpassing glory of God. Our only possible response before Him is to go lower still, to die and become nothing so that He can become everything to us. Our own pride and self-confidence are the biggest obstacles to our ministry, our greatest stumbling blocks, the most obvious chink in our armor. We find it so extremely relaxing and enjoyable to release all confidence in ourselves and simply glory in Christ Jesus. After we have done all, we throw our crowns down at His feet and take credit for nothing. The more we acknowledge our weaknesses and helplessness, the more the power of God rests on us.

The Perfection of Multiple Perspectives

In the course of our ministry in Iris we have increasingly enjoyed great release in understanding that Christian doctrine is not an untidy mass of extremes in constant, inexplicable tension. God's perfections cannot be encompassed by singular positions and perspectives on various issues. Our fellowship should not be a battleground of competing arguments. We should learn again not to underestimate God. Science in this century has been traumatically humbled by observations made in the field of quantum physics. It is simple fact that this dimension of our existence would not operate at all if seemingly incompatible models of the laws of physics were not all valid and operative. For example, our entire electronic semiconductor industry depends on our understanding of quantum mechanics, a model that seems in complete contradiction to our understanding of electromagnetic waves and fields. Yet both must necessarily be operative.

God is perfect and impassive, but He is also wounded, vulnerable and sorrowful. The Christian life is extremely difficult, only for mighty conquerors, but also effortless in Christ and the power of the Spirit. We are favored royalty in the sight of God, but also like the apostle Paul the off-scouring of the world. Jesus became poor so that we might become rich, but we have suffered the loss of all things for the surpassing value of knowing Him. We have free choice, but we did not choose Him, He chose us. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for He is at work in us to will and do His good pleasure. We “labor” to enter His rest. No one seeks God, but we are to seek His face. All who came to Jesus were healed, but He may have other more immediate priorities for us.

How great it is not to argue positions on these issues, but to exult in God’s perfections. We underestimate and diminish God if we doubt that freedom and sovereignty can coexist. Probably no other theological understanding has given me more freedom and exhilaration than to realize that God’s sovereign workmanship in me produces real and total freedom in relationship, and that I am under no pressure whatsoever to assert that freedom apart from His will. I am utterly free to pursue Him with all my heart, and at the same time trust in His total control of me by His Spirit. This is a great mystery, but one that we delight in. Our experience in Iris has taught us to revel in these perfections of God, to accept and thrive on all of scripture, and to be free of debilitating tension.

Our Otherworldly Focus

We take much criticism for being mystical, impractical and otherworldly, of no earthly use. And yet our history is evidence of the opposite: our focus on spiritual, eternal, relational values and faith in an all-powerful Savior from another dimension has produced massive physical transformation and the practical bettering of lives among our people in Mozambique. Nothing could be more practical than knowing our God as well as possible. He is of great value, both in this life and the life to come. Without trusting in

His gracious, supernatural presence and provision, we could not have put millions of dollars into improving lives in Mozambique every year, and been able to feed, clothe and care for in joyous fashion so many people. By trusting in Him alone and not in any fundraising techniques, we have been able to show the practicality of being otherworldly.

At the same time, we realize that ultimately we live for another life, not this one. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, spiritual commandos deep in enemy territory. This world is not our home. We wait faithfully for an inheritance, a Kingdom not made with hands, to be revealed to us at His coming. We understand that what can be seen is temporary, and what is not seen is eternal, and so we keep our priorities in line with reality. Against the modern charismatic trend of promising all blessing in this life and also the life to come, we insist that receiving Christ is a matter of choosing Him and life with Him in heaven over anything this world has to offer. We set our hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

We have learned in Iris not to succumb to tempting, lesser visions, but to keep an eternal perspective in all things. We are after the end result of God's dealings with us, our eternal destiny, and realize with Paul that "light and momentary afflictions" in no way compare to the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Our Essential Core Values

Our core values were taken mostly for granted in our early years. They seemed obvious from scripture, and nothing to emphasize in any special way. Of course we needed to find God, depend on Him, be humble, go to the poor, suffer for Him and rejoice in Him. But over time we found by more exposure to the many worlds of ministry around us how controversial these values actually are. Now, after thirty-some years, we recognize how extraordinarily definitive they are of our ministry, but still insist that they are all perfectly normative for all the church and all Christian mission.

Our experience, as described in spotty fashion in this thesis due to limitations of space, has only increasingly confirmed the absolute need for each of these values. Iris would collapse with the loss of any one of them. We do not impose them on our ministry; the Spirit of God has imposed them on us. We simply recognize them and adopt them, both by choice and sheer necessity, and we continually perceive in hindsight how they have operated in our ministry.

For example, we could not have designed revival in Mozambique. We can say it was triggered by spiritual hunger, but that hunger was produced by divinely superintended preparation. How does a nation become hungry for God? It must be humbled. Mozambique suffered five hundred years of colonialism and slavery. Thirty years of warfare reduced its infrastructure to shambles. From being the “pearl of Africa,” a destination of choice for the adventurous rich of Europe, it descended to being the poorest nation on earth under communism and atheism. It was humiliated to the extreme, desperately dependent on foreign aid. Then in 2000 it was subjected to the worst flooding in recorded history since Noah, enduring torrential rain for forty days and forty nights. More damage was done by that flooding than all the years of warfare. Severe droughts, AIDS, the world’s worst medical infrastructure and educational system all contributed as well to bringing Mozambique to its knees before God. It had no national pride, no hope, no plan. It was in this atmosphere that we saw a massive cry for God rise up all across the country that we had never witnessed or heard of in all our experience and readings of history. What must happen to other nations for them to acquire such hunger?

Heidi and I alone could do nothing against such a challenge. We were not backed by any church. No one sent us or supported us at first. We had no plan, other than to show up and trust Jesus. We stood alone on the streets of Maputo, thrilled at the chance to see what only God could do. He opened doors. He softened officials’ hearts. He convicted victimized street children of their sin. He filled them with His Spirit and revealed Himself

to them. He filled them with massive love, peace and joy. He motivated them to preach boldly and authoritatively on the streets. He began healing the sick and restoring hearts.

We had no intention of starting churches and building Bible schools, but extreme hunger among pastors demanded that we do so. Then He began raising the dead through our pastors, and desire for God spread like wildfire through the bush, and eventually through all ten provinces. No one could have stopped these pastors, who could not help but leap from one village to another starting churches in every village with no one telling them to do so. Signs and wonders exploded like bombs all across the country. People suffered extreme danger and hardship to come to our bush conferences because they heard "Jesus was in town." We had no money for beautiful facilities and impressive productions, and we could never have triggered such fiery desire, but the Holy Spirit drew the people with power like we had never seen. None of this could have been the outworking of a programmed procedure.

Before Heidi and I ever arrived in Mozambique, God was preparing pastoral leaders in the bush, like Surprise Sithole, revealing Himself in spectacularly dramatic ways without the aid of missionaries or any planned influence. They became not our students, but our teachers. They should be teaching in Western seminaries the realities of the gospel and the depths of the love of God.

We never had promise of any financial support, and could never have raised it anyway. We absolutely had no plan in place concerning how to fund our ministry. God had to like what we were doing and provide, or we would have to shut down and go home. We never had any contingency plan. We were always totally dependent on God for every material provision.

Our plan always began with our first core value, finding God and seeking the face of Jesus in everything. We could not have lasted a single day without our second core value, depending on God's miraculous provision for every material and spiritual need. We never could have earned the amazing favor we now have with the government

without first going to the poor and not trying to impress anyone, our third core value. We suffered endless, repeated, impossible hardships and persecution, but did not retreat and protest. We are still in Mozambique because of our fourth core value.

We are criticized severely for our seemingly frivolous fifth core value, but we challenge anyone to go through what we have gone through without a massive, continuous, daily dosage of the joy of the Lord! It is our motivation, reward and greatest weapon, expressing all the faith we have in Jesus! And it is a gift straight from heaven, nothing we can plan or program. We must approach Jesus for it with open, empty hands.

The Plain Gospel, Pure and Simple

Theology gets complicated, and missiology gets sophisticated, but we rely on the purity and simplicity of the gospel, which is simple enough for young children. Our early pastors functioned with incredible anointing with no Bible school education, nor even Bibles, but just a knowledge of the simplest scriptures, like John 3:16. Simple faith in Jesus was all they needed, the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. People in the bush streamed to Jesus, and were healed of all kinds of diseases with only the barest knowledge of the things of God. All they needed was Jesus, who exercised His power without any planning or strategy on the part of these naïve, pioneering pastors. They simply followed the Spirit.

Our aim is to let nothing empty the Cross of its power. Our only hope is to have our sins washed away in the blood of Jesus. May we never stray from such simplicity.

The Power of Impartation

We have seen repeatedly over the years that Christian growth and power for service are functions of the sheer power of the Holy Spirit, and that power can be imparted with astounding speed. More can be accomplished overnight in the Spirit than many experience in entire, lengthy discipleship programs. One vision can change an

entire life. One glimpse of Jesus' face can change everything. One look into hell can change every priority. One taste of heaven and all attraction for the things of this world is lost. We should not and cannot underestimate what God can do to transform the most unlikely and undeserving people in a flash. In Iris we have seen callous, numb, uncaring souls changed into new creations overnight. We are especially seeing a new generation of young believers receiving impartations and visitations we older leaders never dreamed of at that age. Our values lead us to ask and expect all the more from God in the way of priceless impartations of every good gift from His hands, but always seeking His face more than His hands.

Honor

Our values lead us to respect, serve and honor others, trusting the Holy Spirit to do His work without any pressure from us. For that reason we have learned, when entering new villages and territory dominated by another religion, that our most effective beginning strategy is to honor chiefs and leaders of the area rather than to challenge their religion abruptly and create a negative impression before we have had any chance to show the love of Jesus. We do not want to appear the arrogant foreigners. Instead, we get low before them and introduce ourselves as ambassadors of love from Jesus, wanting to help their village in any way we can. We offer to dig wells, start a literacy program, bring medical teams, etc., and in general show warmth and care in all the sincerity of Christ. Very often, before the day is out on our first visit, the village and the area are opened wide to us. Land is offered for yet another church, our ministry teams are invited to present the Christian gospel, and the leaders themselves ask for prayer. And then the Holy Spirit continues to move and soon another village finds a perfect Savior.

In other words, confrontation and displays of miraculous power do not always win hearts. Faith must work through love.

The Unbelieving and Hard of Heart

Our values teach us that we cannot arouse love until it so desires (S of Songs). Love and relationship are not produced automatically by external, physical miracles. We have noticed time after time that even those raised from the dead and healed of serious disease do not necessarily respond well to the gospel or stay fervent and faithful to the Lord. Only one out of ten lepers healed by Jesus came back to thank Him. This understanding leads us to concentrate in our preaching and teaching not solely on external signs and wonders, but always on relationship. Churches deteriorate, pastors fall away, people lose interest, revival declines and our movement dries up if all we emphasize are prosperity, healings, manifestations and external phenomena. In Iris we have never chased signs and wonders, but only the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Signs and wonders then chase us. “Doing the stuff” is not the point. Jesus is always the point.

When the miraculous occurs, pastors and leaders may become highly energized and motivated to preach passionately the power and love of Jesus to villages a hundred miles around. But we understand that the very people who experience these miracles may not themselves attain the relationship with God that we preach. And witnesses of miracles may still not believe, no matter how obvious the evidence. We are convinced that one reason God does not do more miracles is that they often get more attention than He does. And no matter how great physical miracles are, relationship with God is even greater.

Conclusion

We only have one destination, one home, one reality, one resting place, one source, one motivation, one reward, one possession, one point of contact with God, one source of real satisfaction—and that is Jesus. We cannot overemphasize Him in any way. He is all we have and everything we need. All we do is come to Him like children for

everything. His is the only name under heaven in which we trust. He is our wisdom, sanctification and joy. In Him we have no anxiety about anything. He provides our guidance. He is able so speak to us, to guide us, to thrill us by His Spirit. Our souls find our greatest delight in Him and He gives us the desires of our hearts. Our five core values can be condensed into one: in Jesus we must enjoy life! In Him we can laugh, for our worst trials and challenges are small in His sight. Our message is always Good News. We can only give Him praise and honor forever and ever.

Future Study

This thesis has been a broad brush painting a large picture of what we have done, experienced and learned in the history of Iris Global, and intentionally so. Any more narrowly focused presentation would likely miss the aggregate significance of our five core values. But every point raised here invites far more detailed discussion, and an even deeper pursuit of understanding in the Lord. We in Iris feel we are just experiencing the tip of an iceberg of the power and presence of God. Let us forget what lies behind and press on the what lies ahead! Our hunger will sustain us!

APPENDIX A

I knew my grandfather until he died in 1971, and reveled in his stories of his life and ministry in old China where he had seen so much of the power of the kingdom of God. For decades I could only imagine his actual environment in the remote mountains of southern Yunnan Province, as the area was closed to foreigners by the Chinese government. But eventually the government's restrictions were lifted, and in 2001 I traveled excitedly to my grandfather's beloved mountain valley that he called home for fifteen years. My trip added so much power and conviction to my missionary calling that I include my description of it here. May the reader gain all the more insight into the heritage that has so shaped the style, heart, motivation and "methodology" of Iris Global.¹

A Missionary Legacy

The rocks are slippery in the dark. I slide, catch myself, and notice with my dimming flashlight that I'm at the edge of a cliff. The footpath gets steeper and even rockier. I come to streams and choose stepping stones carefully. I and half-a-dozen others press on down the mountainside, and I just follow the leader. It's late and getting very cold. We crash through bushes and inch along, carefully keeping our balance as the trail gets narrow. The ground rises comfortingly on our right, but disappears into blackness on our left.

"It's just ahead!" I'm told. "Only another half-mile! We'll be right there!" On we go. I can't picture our surroundings at all. My feet are cracking and hurting, even with

1. Contained in Rolland Baker, "A Missionary Legacy," online newsletter sent to the Iris Global mailing list, available at <http://www.irismin.org/news/newsletters/view/a-missionary-legacy>, posted November 21, 2001.

good hiking shoes. We cross more streams and balance on more sharp rocks. I'm carrying a camera bag and just trying not to get hurt. There would be no medical help if I did.

Finally, hours into the night, the path levels into a small clearing. Tall bamboo trees arc overhead. There's a hut of some kind before us, with a dim light. We hear shouts of excitement. They've heard us coming and run out to meet us. We get led through a low doorway into a courtyard, and then there are hugs, greetings and bows all around.

Everyone is grinning hugely. These people have been waiting years for this day. H. A. Baker's grandson has arrived!

I feel like I have reached the ends of the earth. I'm deep inside China, high up in an incredibly remote mountain valley among a nearly forgotten minority tribe. And I have come to my grandfather's home of fifteen years, his beloved Ka Do land. Not since the communists forced him to leave more than fifty years ago has anyone seen a foreigner here. My father was never able to make the trip. Now that government restrictions have lifted, I have come to taste and see for myself the world of my grandfather's books, accounts of God at work among the poor, meek and lowly of the earth.

I started this trip from Africa, where I was meeting with our famine-stricken Malawi pastors. I flew my plane back to central Mozambique, then to our home in Maputo to the south, and on to Nelspruit in South Africa. After a commuter flight to Johannesburg, I endured an eighteen-hour leg to Atlanta, and then continued to Pennsylvania where Heidi and I met and participated in a conference. She went her way, and after stops in Chicago, Los Angeles, Tokyo and Hong Kong, I arrived in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province in southwest China, and the place of my birth.

It took most of a day in a rented van to reach Mojiang, the first main town into the mountains from Kunming. There I connected with an old man, Li Shu Yi, eighty-three years old. He's the only one left of all the orphans written about in *Visions Beyond the Veil*, my grandfather's account of an intensely wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his orphanage back in Kunming. Li Shu Yi's parents died when he was little, and he was

adopted by his rich uncle and aunt who had no children of their own. But they were cruel to him. One day when he was only six his aunt lost her temper and fiercely beat him until her stick broke, his clothes were torn and he lost his body functions. He escaped to the streets, lost, afraid and crying his heart out. In the night he was robbed of his clothes and left with the filthy, smelly rags of a beggar. My grandfather took him in. My grandmother gave him a bath and changed his clothes, bursting into tears when she saw his bruises and wounds.

Li Shu Yi became a devoted son to my grandparents, never leaving them all their days in China. In 1926 when he was nine the Holy Spirit fell on the orphans, and as they described what they were seeing while in visions, Li Shu Yi translated their local dialect for my grandfather, who wrote down all that he heard for his book. This went on for months, a time of rare and privileged revelation that has enriched the faith of believers all over the world who have read the story.

In 1929 my grandfather began making long, arduous journeys into the mountains to preach to the Ka Do minority tribe. There were no roads or buses in those days, and my grandfather would be gone for months, climbing the ridges and descending into the valleys every day on foot. The mountain people were wild and rough. Many were thieves and bandits. He wore their coarse peasant clothes, ate their simple, meager food, and walked in their thin cotton shoes, whatever the terrain. And always, wherever he went, there was Li Shu Yi with him, his constant walking companion, translator and helper.

In 1935 my grandparents moved to a beautiful valley deep in Ka Dao land, where I am today. The journey from Kunming took seventeen days. From here my grandfather itinerated in all directions, preaching the gospel to poor villages clinging to terraced mountainsides. He might walk twenty miles a day, each day in a different village, and he bore great fruit. Thousands all over his own valley came to Jesus, and in time he was regularly traveling a circuit of forty churches. The Holy Spirit fell on these simple people,

written about in another of my grandfather's many books, *God in Ka Do Land*.² Later I would listen to my grandfather tell endless stories of those days. He opened up to me a supernatural reality filled with angels, demons, the power of the Spirit and the presence of Jesus.

Tonight I am in Li Shu Yi's house, which my grandfather helped to build right next to his own. It's a typical mountain peasant hut, nearly bare, built around a small courtyard. The stars overhead are clear. The night gets colder, and we pull rough wooden benches up to a pot of hot coals to keep warm. And we talk of years gone by, when the suffering and endurance of one foreigner was used by God to bring mercy and hope to faraway lost sheep in an entire region. The village administrator joins us, along with the village's several teachers. Are they Christians? No, they would lose their government jobs if they were. Later, later. But they want to hear more about this Jesus. My friend Ken Zhao from Shanghai is with me on this trip, and together we give out the Good News. We read John 3:16. Jesus is worth everything. We live and move by His Spirit, and in Him we inherit all things. One teacher has never read the Bible at all, and we give him a copy. He is excited. We tell stories of what God has done for us. Everyone is concentrating intently on our words. Li Shu Yi fervently affirms us.

It is late and our guests have to leave. They are moved, and if they choose Jesus, they may pay a very high price in this persecuted society. China's cultural revolution and communist repression put out free expression of Christian worship. Even now most believers remain careful and low-key, treasuring what they know quietly in their hearts. The intense revival my grandfather saw is subdued after two generations. But Li Shu Yi prays his heart out for his people and land, grief-stricken at the blindness of China's new and materialistic society. He has suffered in prison for his faith and his service to my grandfather, and threatened with execution. Unaframed of death, he kept insisting on

2. H. A. Baker, *God in Ka Do Land*. Available as PDF file at <http://www.irisglobal.org/pdf/God-in-Ka-Do-Land.pdf>.

leading my grandfather's churches after 1949. The government tried hard to bring accusations against him, but could find no evidence of wrongdoing. He has been allowed to register his churches legally. Today these forty churches have come eighty, and Li Shu Yi is still their spiritual father. Other revival movements in China prefer to remain unregistered and suffer the consequences, but we must be grateful for what Li Shu Yi has been able to accomplish.

I sleep on Li Shu Yi's own bed, a short, hard straw mattress. Even under a thick quilt and fully dressed, I am so cold. The household is up before dawn and soon I emerge to find a fire blazing in the courtyard. We have noodles, peanuts and fruit for breakfast. Li Shu Yi's son and family keep the house now, and they spare no effort to honor my visit. Ken and I are taken around the hillside and shown what my grandfather planted and built. We walk his paths and stand in his gardens. We see his prayer mountain, a high peak overlooking his valley where he took hundreds of believers at a time to fast and pray. In the far-off haze among the rice paddies and vegetable gardens we spot the villages in which every family came to know Jesus. All around the valley stand more peaks that complete the physical grandeur of this rich, fruitful field of mission.

Li Shu Yi talks as we walk. His eyes fill with tears over and over as he remembers my grandfather's sufferings. He is so moved by God's grace working through the love of this foreigner for the Ka Do mountain people. He tells me how my grandfather would lean on his stick against the hillside when he was sick and in pain, always pressing on, always praying for healing, always trusting God for everything. And Jesus would be with him and carry him forward. During World War II no support could come from America, so Li Shu Yi and my grandfather planted peppers in their garden and traded them for food. Li Shu Yi made hats with my grandmother's sewing machine and sold those. My grandmother wrote many letters, and everywhere my grandfather traveled, he was somehow writing more books, true treasures of spirituality.

It's late in the morning and time to go. I have a conference back in Africa. Ken and I start the climb out of the valley, accompanied by Li Shu Yi and his grandson and granddaughter. This old man still walks everywhere, just like my grandfather did until he was ninety. We finally make it to a little town high on the ridge, rocky, windswept and so far away from all that we know. It's market day, and the little streets and alleys are jammed with goods in stalls and on the ground, all carried in by great effort over long distances across the mountains. We climb into our tiny hired van, made in China, and then for hours struggle, bounce and lurch over a fiercely rough dirt road. Rocks, ditches and mud hinder us all the way. Often we get out and push. We get to a tar road, but it is torn up and winds so tightly that it still takes us three hours to travel forty miles. Eventually that night we arrive in Mojiang and we say good-bye to Li Shu Yi. His churches and people need help. We must return. Jesus will not forget them.

A seven-hour bus journey the next morning brings us back to Kunming. I cannot comprehend how my grandfather made that trip on foot over and over, year after year. How could a foreigner endure that much isolation and deprivation? No other missionary wanted to join him. And only Li Shu Yi stayed with him every step of the way. Today I have my grandfather's hardwood walking stick, carved by Li Shu Yi and worn down many inches. It is a testament in my hands of what our King and Lord will do with one willing servant lover.

Now I am back in Africa among people even more poverty-stricken than Chinese country peasants. Only a few years ago Mozambique was also repressed terribly by a communist regime. Today it cries out in desperation for Jesus and the gospel, and only a small band of missionaries are trying to pull in a harvest of millions of souls. Conditions in most of the country are primitive beyond Western imagination, but we have freedom to preach. "Who will endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus?" (2 Timothy 2:3) Who will say with Paul, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I

may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace?" (Acts 20:24)

God used my grandfather's life to inspire and encourage my father and mother in their lives of missionary service, and now He continues to do the same with Heidi and me. I doubt that I would ever have considered working with orphans and the poor in forgotten, nonstrategic corners of the world without my grandfather's example. But in his life I see the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). May such glory invade all our lives until we see His face and are safely home with Him in His heavenly Kingdom. —*Rolland Baker, Pemba, November 2001*

APPENDIX B

Provided below is a foreword to my grandfather's autobiography written by my son, Elisha Baker, which will help the reader place the life and work of H. A. Baker in the context of Iris Global, and more thoroughly explicate the continuity of H. A.'s ministry with that of Iris Global in Africa.¹

Foreword to *Under His Wings*

When Rolland and Heidi Baker first went abroad as missionaries in 1980, forming what is now called Iris Global, they did not do so absent the guiding impulse of a long vocational ancestry. To be understood rightly that descent must be traced down lines both spiritual and natural, but of all its recent progenitors, perhaps the single most influential on either count was Harold Armstrong Baker. He was Rolland Baker's grandfather, and my great-grandfather. His were the core mission practices—expressions of his highest values for all ministry—which have influenced those of my parents to a greater extent than have any other examples in living memory.

Rolland Baker, my father, grew up in the Far East, as had all the Bakers from Harold onwards. Newly wed, he would return there with my mother soon after they had completed college in America. It was their first mission field. They began in Indonesia, home of my own earliest memories, and soon came to Hong Kong, where for four years they labored among widows, gangs, and the homeless in some of earth's most crowded slums. In their constant devotion to the poorest and most “problematic” individuals, as

1. Foreword by Elisha Baker. H. A. Baker, *Under His Wings*, original publisher unknown, available online at <http://www.irisglobal.org/pdf/Under-His-Wings.pdf>, Iris 2008 edition. Elisha Baker is converting H. A. Baker's writings to e-book format for free distribution. Email Baker at elishajbaker@gmail.com for further information.

well as in their willingly subservient adoption of a dizzying myriad of cultural novelties for the gospel's sake, they closely mirrored much of Harold Baker's work—consciously to some degree, but even more so as a natural and effortless result of a shared vision of Christ's special love for the downcast. When my parents came to Africa some fifteen years later, they were borne there not by whim, but by a very particular momentum which has now crested with a remarkable revival in Mozambique and many nations beyond. This has proven a divine work that unquestionably reverberates in the same spiritual notes as one which God ignited the better part of a century ago, in one of the most remote and then-wild regions of China. In that movement, Harold Armstrong Baker was used as a primary catalyst, serving for many years as a nearly lone spiritual custodian to numerous tribespeople in the far southwest mountains of Yunnan Province. I believe that God has seen fit to preserve the inheritance of his calling and lifelong service, among many other ways, by its distinct bestowal upon his grandchildren.

That older movement in China can be traced further back, of course, to Azusa Street and from thence back through all the centuries filled with saints. Yet with Harold Baker, if nothing else, the course of our own family surely takes a radical turn for the most pioneering forms of ministry (as our friend Dr. Chevreau once pointed out, my parents have usually not so much resembled “settlers” as they have “commandos”). Beyond this, however, I believe that through the work of Harold's lifetime something new and distinctive can be seen to emerge, which before was not but today remains—in Iris as well as in many other ministries worldwide. Of what this distinctiveness consists is best grasped, like so many of God's most profound blessings, through its story—and there are few resources today that can stand alongside this one for telling it. This is Harold Baker's autobiography.

Notably, one of those few other resources is Harold's most well-known book, *Visions Beyond the Veil*. That work details the extraordinary blessings and extensive visions of the supernatural world given to a small group of orphaned children at the

Adullam orphanage, whom he and his wife had taken in from the brutal streets of a small mining town by the name of Kotchiu. For those who have read *Visions Beyond the Veil*, this autobiography will locate the events recounted there, among a great many others that he considered to be of equally surpassing wonder. (Indeed, what multitude of signs and miracles he witnessed in his earthly life we are now unlikely to discover, this side of heaven, but these further accounts ought to serve as a fine supplement for the hungry.)

In light of the events of *Visions Beyond the Veil*, it is just one conspicuous example of the continuity between the blessings Harold recounted and those we have seen in Mozambique today that a majority of the most powerful supernatural experiences among us have occurred with our children. Much like Harold's rescued orphans, we have a large family of kids who came to us from one of the most unreported, politically insignificant and apparently powerless social strata in the world—street urchins and village outcasts in one of the world's poorest nations. Giving them a home and a family has been the central effort of Iris Ministries since 1995, and it is by no means coincidental or arbitrary that they are blessed after the heritage of the children of Adullam. For whatever common mantle God may have passed from Harold to Rolland and Heidi Baker, through years and faithful generations, surely it can never be separated from this: a burning desire not only to save souls, but to bring the fullness of the miraculous power of the manifest Holy Spirit specifically to those whom the world has considered the most hopeless, the most afflicted, the most negligible, and the most lacking in all modernistic potential. It is the privilege of this call to render to these the service due kings.

Harold Baker was above all else honored to serve as heaven's ambassador to peoples that remained, by and large, very far from the world's centers of focus. He lived a life almost entirely isolated from all attentions of the socially lofty. Yet in all sincerity, he considered the men and women of his chosen tribes priceless, seeing in them eternal fruits exceeding the worth of every treasure of his age. He cared far less whether they or he should become famed in the nations than he did for the service itself; nonetheless, God

had a purpose in the recording of these things, and Harold's writing too was prompted by more than whim. Harold knew and taught that God especially loves to bless such peoples, not in spite of the low appraisal the world gives them, but precisely because of it. He believed that God's attitude concerning the poor ought always remain a lesson to us, a theme to be read and re-read throughout his rough-hewn books. One finds in them a voice proclaiming that the poor are blessed because God's power is made perfect in weakness; blessed because his grace is sufficient. They are blessed because He would use the things that are not to shame the things that are; blessed because He confounds the wisdom of wise. Blessed because of the compassion of the heart that spoke out in the beatitudes; blessed because He would have witnesses that His power does not end, but rather begins with being victorious over the darkest and most challenging of all human circumstances. Most of all, they are blessed simply because these whom He loves are those who have not refused to enter into His wedding feast—even while so many of their richer judges have deferred. What Iris does today is built on the premise that what God does through them will yet shake the world to its foundations.

Insofar as the culture of ministry my parents have sought to build holds these things to be true, and inasmuch as they have been entrusted with the testimony, the revelations, and the responsibility that have accompanied God's call to their particular field of service, they, along with all of us who would stand alongside them, remain indebted to Harold Baker. Not chiefly for his direct teachings, though many are fine ones; nor for the texts he left, valuable as many of them are. But we are indebted above all for the heart which God put in him concerning these things, which stands behind us like a mountain extending its kind shadow across our path—the memory of a forbear who finished his race with all his heart. With toil and devotion he uncovered anew for his descendants a great many of those old wells of truth from which we, in our present labors, are constantly refreshed. We believe that the privilege of tending the still-living fruits of his service is to us an exceptional honor, and to him a standing reward.

Now neither this honor nor any other of his greatest legacies—whether of learning or wisdom, understanding or compassion, or of any other kind—are in any way confined to us. Ultimately, the things Harold Baker gave a life towards are not merely principles for missionaries; they are far more. They are concrete visions of how God has loved and cared for some of His children in the world—how He has been pleased to work in men and to make Himself plain to them. They are a still-unfolding collection of His stories, each one unique, each an irreplaceable portrait of the Unchanging One. As particular expressions of God’s heart, they will always remain liable to shoot forth roots and bloom again...in all cultures, times, and places. Should this newly redistributed edition of Harold Baker’s life story find any reader with a hunger for those treasures, whole-heartedly we pray that any and all of them may fall also to you—in form and measure apposite to that life which has been prepared for you. May they find fertile soil in you, and bear a rich fruit. So be it. —*Elisha James Baker, August 2008*

The question of discipleship method is always before us in Christian ministry. But the aim of this thesis is to provide a broader view of our necessary spiritual values and how they get transmitted, especially to new generations. Specific techniques and styles may differ widely, but here we insist on the foundations of being both a soldier and a lover of Jesus Christ that have produced the core values of Iris Global, values that have spread widely and also generationally through the work of the Holy Spirit. My son Elisha’s rich expression not only of his appreciation of his great-grandfather’s spirituality, but also the spiritual dynamic of lineage and how it has operated in our family and ministry should help the reader absorb more of the “DNA” of our spirit and “methodology” in Iris Global.² His contribution is provided below.

2. This is chapter one of a book in progress by Elisha Baker describing in moving detail the transference of spiritual values from H. A. Baker’s ministry in China to Iris Global in Africa, and how that is an example of fruitful lineage for many other family lines in the body of Christ, with all its attendant positive and negative aspects.

The Glory and Fruit of Spiritual Lineage in the Body of Christ

My people are Kingdom-seekers, to the death. My great-grandfather came from Ohio. He desired to fulfill a mission for his King, and went to Tibet. On that mission he buried two of his children, including his firstborn. He and his wife moved on to China. Many years later, after a world war and a revolution, they retired to Taiwan. There they followed those children home. They had spent nearly all of their adult years preaching abroad, often in regions so remote that it took half-a-year or more to send a letter to America. He and my great-grandmother volunteered for a lifetime of hard trials, and it gave them great joy. That is our tradition.

My great-grandparents were Harold and Josephine Baker. Their work took them over unpredictable and strenuous paths through lonely country, and whether by itineraries or emergencies they were often separated, sometimes for years at a time. More than once, Josephine fell so sick that my great-grandfather began to prepare for her burial. She bade him goodbye dozens of times over when he set off into the mountains on foot, going into wild country with no easy means of communication and no certain guarantee of a return. Malnutrition and illness, tenuous or absent connections with their homeland, wars, the rising persecutions of China's "cultural revolution" and banditry that itself sometimes came little short of open warfare; my great-grandparents went to all these things for a purpose. That purpose moved in them like a fire. I write these things because that purpose is still moving.

Harold's walking staff leans in my father's office. It is four inches shorter than its original length, ground down by nineteen thousand miles of trekking back and forth over the tribal lands of the Ka Do and other native peoples in the mountains of Yunnan Province, in southwest China. When the persecution of Christians under Mao Zedong grew most severe, Harold's Chinese friends demanded that he take his family from the country. It was only with some reluctance that he went to preach in Taiwan. When for a

brief time he returned to the United States (a rare event during his life), he preached to the Navajo people. Now he has gone to the home he longed for all his life. His deeds on this earth are finished—and yet, we say, they are not.

The life my parents have led is one ablaze with the same fire that took my great-grandparents (on two sides, in fact) and my grandparents to the ends of the earth. It lives, and burns, and bids my family to offer their own lives, for all the same reasons. The mission is here; the mantle is here. It did not fall to the ground. My parents, Rolland and Heidi Baker, ministered for twelve years in southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Indonesia. My memories begin in Bali and Jakarta. For the past fifteen years they have worked in Mozambique, where I lived with them until I came to university in the States. Wherever they have gone, they have sought out the poor, the destitute and the forgotten, so that they might bless them with all their strength. Currently, they oversee many churches and a number of centers where more than 2,000 children, most of whom previously had no homes or families, now live. Before they came to Mozambique, where orphans are many, they had ministered mostly to drug addicts, gang members, street sleepers and occasionally lawyers.

We have seen a host of wonderful things in this time—some miracles that have been fearful and full of awe, like violent winds howling out from a cast-open furnace of uncreated light; others quiet and tender, hidden for the humble, gentle as only God's heart for the broken can be. Much that we have seen is still unusual in this age, but the way was made easier for us because of lineage.

This is a work about lineage. At first glance it might appear to be concerned with a lineage of flesh and blood, but that is not the one I am concerned with here. Families often do pass on a spiritual lineage, because children are often (though assuredly not always) in an excellent position to stand upon the heights their natural parents have captured for them. My father did precisely that, and my father's father. But a spiritual

lineage is not bound to the natural flesh. Natural children may carry it, or not; but those who do carry a spiritual lineage are called children after the spirit. Such a lineage exists in and belongs to those with the will and the grace to take hold of it. It is for those who honor spiritual fathers to be spiritual sons. That is why it is proper for today's churches, though we are predominantly gentiles, to be known as "children of Abraham." It is also why the things I write about do not belong to my family, but are for the church as a whole. Most particularly, they are for those who want them.

We may say that a spiritual lineage exists when God, as He loves and is loved by a human being, touches His deeds with eternity. There is lineage when He enfolds our creativity with His immortality; in this way the perishable puts on the imperishable. By such lineages the Almighty does not allow the works He has done with His friends upon the earth to fade away, but weaves them instead into the everlasting tapestry of His people, His immortal bride, the church—the church, I say, as it will one day be revealed. This kind of spiritual lineage is always the fruit of anything that is created in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, for such things are never forgotten. They are never lost to heaven, and they may be revisited upon the earth at any time.

It was a mighty lineage that was born when Abraham chose to trust God, leaving his ancestral home on an unknown journey and going so far as to raise a knife over his own firstborn on the altar. A thousand and more years later it was his family, the line of that very child, whom God honored above all others by the gift of His own son. As Jesus said, if the Jews had not praised Him when He rode into Jerusalem, the very stones would have cried out. The call of that lineage to God was so strong that God might have raised children for Abraham from those stones, had no one recognized the truth. Lineage was created and interwoven in the deeds of Melchizedek and Moses, Rahab and Ruth, Boaz and Esther, all the prophets and the all the Apostles who followed. Such a mighty lineage flowered through King David that God Himself was not ashamed to be called the Son of David; and the Almighty will count that name amongst His own forever. David was in

love with God, and the deeds he did because of it will endure like God's, even to the sharing of a name. John is above all remembered as "The Baptist" because God so valued his ministry to Abraham's people that, as Messiah, He insisted on undergoing that baptism for Himself. John trembled to do it, but it was God's pleasure to grant him the honor. John was rightly called the greatest of his age, for Jesus entered into the lineage of his baptism.

Many great and broad spiritual lineages have met together in Christ and now already cover the whole earth, as thoroughly as have Abraham's and David's. Day after day they are joined to a multitude of other lineages. From one holy nature, many lineages arose, and will yet come together. Most are smaller in their visible and historic extent than Abraham's. I testify about one, much smaller lineage, because for many years I have been able see this one at close hand. I can bear a sincere witness to the purity of its ardor. This one, perhaps, is small enough that we may more easily hold it in our hands—there to look upon closely.

I do this in part because I hope it might shed some light on all the lineages of heaven, as they grow and branch out (and sometimes lie dormant) through the generations of mankind. If the lineage I write about is indeed small, I hope it can yield some simple examples to help illuminate some of the similar, but often older and more complex lineages of ten thousand other saints.

Moreover, I believe that a time is coming soon when we will need each and every lineage that has ever been born of God to be fully woven together. In this will be a harmony more breathtaking than any this world has ever seen. Each skein of divine destiny must be bound to its proper place in the body of Christ, and there the righteous will shine like the sun. We need one another. The manifest unity that still lies before us is not an option for the church. Today, therefore, I also write this so that anyone who desires what lineage my family has borne may have it, just as soon as he wishes to carry it. Some may have need of it sooner, some later. One day, every lineage in the kingdom of heaven

will be fully available to each one of its citizens, at any time. I believe we will make a vital use of them all. Each will receive a fullness of glory. Today, I offer what I am able. If it is for you to take it up in this hour, and drink deeply.

Several years ago my father nearly died of cerebral malaria. Much of the time since he has suffered from severe and degenerating symptoms of dementia, brought on (perhaps—the doctors are still unsure) from a series of related micro-strokes, or some other unidentified subtropical malady. When I visited Mozambique last summer—as I have done every summer since I moved to America — I was told I should tell him goodbye.

Technically, I suppose this was a unique experience. But for me it was not an unusual one. My mother and father have been imprisoned, mugged, deported, robbed, and assaulted by more diseases of the developing world than we have means to diagnose. They receive more death threats than we bother to count. They have been beaten with varying severity, and stood many times at knife-point or gun muzzle. They have often faced armed extortion, angry mobs, burglaries, fraudulent blackmail, car-jackings and street muggings. I have heard dire warnings from many doctors about their imminent demise. My mother, in particular, has recovered from more than one diagnosis of some incurable disease (and for all the miracles we have seen, I still hope each one is the last.) They have faced riots, some personally directed at them; the latter having arisen because desperate people wanted more from them than they had to give. They have faced accusations from spying for the CIA to drug trafficking to selling the organs of orphans on the black market (providing children's brains to the witch doctors for potions, as one rumor had it—for which a furious crowd once chased one of our staff members through a cluttered marketplace in Maputo). My mother has never been shipwrecked, quite, but last year she came very close during bad weather off the coast of northern Mozambique. Her boat was swamped, and she was given a ride home by a canoe full of naked fishermen.

One of the men swam to shore and back to fetch them all clothes, so that she would not be uncomfortable while they rowed her back to civilization.

Can you see this as a glorious life? For some that is easy. Our society is full of tales which tell us about the worth of sacrifice. To others, though, glory is a word with little meaning, and a tale of sacrifice is easily reduced to a cliché. We have heard it often enough that it may sound trite to say something like, “It was a small price to pay.” As though by overuse such words are now condemned to be no more than a “mere” truism. In literature, as in life, there can arise a certain temptation to become jaded about noble sacrifices. We want what is fresh. In the West, at least, if we are going to hear about sacrifice yet again, we want assurance that the thing sacrificed for is at least real. That it is worthy.

The Kingdom of God is worth both living and dying for. In Christendom, it is sometimes possible to agree with this and yet leave it untested, unpracticed—as a “mere” truism. An author I much admire, the Scottish preacher George MacDonald, spoke well of such truisms:

A mere truism, is it? Yes, it is, and more is the pity; for what is a truism, as most men count truisms? What is it but a truth that ought to have been buried long ago in the lives of men—to send up forever the corn of true deeds and the wine of loving kindness—but, instead of being buried in friendly soil, is allowed to lie about, kicked hither and thither in the dry and empty garret of their brains, till they are sick of the sign and sound of it and, to be rid of the thought of it, declare it to be no living truth but only a lifeless truism? Yet in their brain that truism must rattle until they shift it to its rightful quarters in their heart, where it will rattle no longer but take root and be a strength and loveliness.

My family has taught, by the entirety of their lives, these words: “He who seeks his life shall lose it, but he who loses his life shall find it.” All of my youth’s instruction has been that it is worth any price to serve the Lord. Constantly to offer your life for His sake, and for the sake of those He loves—even for the sake of those who are yet His enemies—is the only kind of life that is worth living. *Sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the truth. It is alike the way of warriors, of kings and of lovers. The children of God must be

all these things and more, and so they will be. In those who I call my people, this has always been “a strength and loveliness.” No one will ever take it from them.

As for my father’s sickness, during these past years I have simply believed as I have learned to do—that he will leave this earth no sooner than God thinks he is ready. It was certainly not last summer. He has largely recovered from his dementia (which was in any case a symptom no one seemed to have a solid explanation for). I have said in faith that his greatest years are before him. I say it still. That he recovered, despite no particular medical hope or even comprehension, was also no great surprise.

Harold and Josephine Baker had gone to speak about Jesus in lands that had never heard that name. Later, grown old and retired to Taiwan, it was with genuine pain that they would describe their long separations from one another, their lost children and many other trials great and small. They were not stoics. Unabashed anguish is easy to find in their memoirs. However, my great-grandfather also expressed outright regret that he had not had the honor of enduring more difficulties, more suffering for the sake of his King. Compared to what he had seen in China, his own sufferings were small. But his joy over having suffered them was sincere—what has become a thoroughly un-modern thing. He was glad about them, because he longed for eternity to appreciate that his life had been given fully to his Lord. He considered the very cost of his mission a positive witness to its truth. He was glad of what befell him, because He saw it as a song of God’s grace to keep him—a melody of the worthiness of God to be adored in all circumstances. He felt that his song could not have the same poignancy, sung from a life of unbroken leisure. He thought it supremely worthwhile to testify of grace by his tears, as much as by his ecstasies. This was no small thing, for he surely was an ecstatic.

He spoke this way without a trace of irony. I know this by its continued fruit in my family. His was the wildest and most ancient breed of chivalry. It was a glory-bound thing, as from the oldest myths of mankind. It was incautious and fearless and terrible in

its sacrifices. It was dangerous, and its stumblings were costly. It remains all but incomprehensible to a great many civilized people. The harsher warriors of the Iron Age might have understood him better than many of us—I think something familiar would have been recognized at once in him by a Samson, a David, an Achilles. His chivalry was beautiful, for it was a thing Jesus had. I say, in fact, it was a thing from Jesus. I am sure my great-grandfather would not, with his understanding of humility, have comfortably ascribed such a thing as “chivalry” to himself—but he was always passionate about preaching it. All my life this has struck me deeply, because it is the kind of honor my family has sought ever since. They will serve all that they see and know of the Kingdom of God, to the utmost of their knowledge and ability. They will do this at any price. I can testify that this is true, and also that the price has often been high. I can testify that I have suffered a little (only a little)—and yet I would gladly have suffered to the end of my endurance to see their tale lived as gloriously as they have lived it. I am willing, because I have known them, and I can testify that it has always been about love.

Love—

Love is more jealous than the grave.

Should I blush to praise my own family so? I smile even to think it, for surely it will take eternity for the saints to give one another all the honor that each is due. But if I call them saints, will it be thought no more than a son’s idolization? An exaggeration? Some of what I will write about miracles might appear implausible to those who are unaccustomed to them. Yet to have seen the great miracle—human bodies, vessels of dust, the souls of my kin, changed and made into the one Body of Christ? That, surely, will always be the most remarkable thing that can be believed about anyone. To have, in those great and terrible hours, seen His face with utter clarity in their words, their faces, their deeds—will people think it hyperbole? A lie? If I say that I began to know Jesus because I knew my elders, will people think I mean a constructed Jesus, an appropriation of old tales, a customization of shared cultural myths? Who will grasp either my awe, or

the honor I mean to give when I say I mean I met through them the living Jesus of Israel, who always was, and is and always will be? Who is present with power to change reality in any sphere? Whose unveiled eyes are unspeakable fire, who sits with the Trinity as One, who stands at the beginning and end of the uttermost dreams of all the living? He has walked in our sight on Mozambique's plains. He is still literally opening the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, still calling life into the dead. He hides himself from the arrogant and blazes clear before the humble. Most especially, He has shown Himself with obvious and incandescent delight to those who were formerly the poorest and most neglected people I have ever seen. If anyone cannot believe these things of Jesus, let them at least believe He is all these things to me; and to me, He has shown Himself in all these ways through my father and my mother, and those who came before them—my teachers and my forbears.

If to any man this seems like too great a praise, I think he is mistaken.

Enlightened eyes can see all these things in any Christian; in anyone who has born of the Holy Spirit. Yet I hope no one will be disillusioned when all is one day revealed about us, my family and me. Personally, I have taken our errors very gravely. There have been many. Some I will write about here. Some are not mine to tell. I offer you my family, but I do not do so lightly. It is not painless for me to give them. In truth I spent many years afraid to write as I do now; partly because I did not want the obvious wounds that have hindered my behavior to cause people to doubt the honor I mean to give them, and partly because I did not want to be thought to give even tacit approval to our mistakes. Those did hurt, and I want no one else to suffer them.

I have often read how reticent many soldiers are, once they have returned from combat duty, to speak about their experience of war. Some fear being judged for the things they felt or did in response to violence—especially by people who were not there and, as it seems, could not possibly understand. Some have judged themselves more harshly than anyone else ever could, and do not wish to broadcast their shame. I am sure

there are many other possible reasons, but these ones seem very familiar to me. My family, certainly, have never been subject to the particular stresses of combat trauma, but we have seen many other kinds. I think a few of the parallels are real, for which reason silence has sometimes seemed the best course.

I cannot remember a time when I did not love God. That was surely sheer grace to me, because I also cannot very distinctly remember any time when I was not aware of immense suffering all around me. Not because I was unusually sensitive, I think, but because my family have always sought out the suffering. Nothing about that is easy. Not for children or adults. I have carried my share of unresolved and destructive tensions about such a life. A child's boundaries are thin, and much knowledge of the sufferings of others can press hard upon them. I knew great tensions, especially, between some of the ways in which I have responded to my family's sacrifices, and the ways I thought I should have.

Looking back upon these things in present contemplation, I believe that the more deeply we wish to make ourselves available to the suffering, the more wisdom we need to do so without inadvertently offering what is not rightly ours to give. To hold onto life-giving priorities—to know which measures of our time and energy belong only to God, or else are also to be reserved for family, or for our neighbors, or for our foes, each in proper proportion—is a very precious ability. To know what we are able to do, what we are responsible for, and also which responsibilities must be released entirely to God, is an equally precious ability.

This is a field in which practice is paramount, but unavoidably hazardous. It is certainly true that my family has learned much of their wisdom the hard way. It is also true that my parents have learned these abilities to the degree that they have by the exercise of indomitable, iron-souled courage and a perseverance that has blessed many thousands. If any of us wish to live in the company of saints and heroes, I say we are wise not to complain when those who reach for the best things make even rather harsh errors.

If anyone who stumbles has the courage to learn from it, and the tenacity to get up, press forward, and so to risk another fall, then all of us should be grateful to gain the wisdom their example shall earn. Some wisdom seems obvious once we have watched other people fall through the lack of it. Nonetheless, whenever we find judgment a little too easy, it seems to me we may shockingly often look just a little farther and find that the only reason we have not fallen ourselves is because we did not aim at so high a goal as those who did.

Such things, at least, I will say boldly about my parents, my grandparents and great-grandparents—precisely because I do have a deep share in the pain of so many of our mistakes. I was often grieved. Yet I was healed and abundantly comforted, and so for my part I will call our mistakes redeemed.

Some of the sacrifices we made were entirely needful. Some were terribly ill-advised—and these days, I dare say my parents will agree with me about most of those. When I was young, there were times when I was very angry about both kinds of sacrifice, though I could not well have articulated it. I also could not easily tell the difference between the two, and usually I felt a great deal of guilt for my anger—along with many other shames (as all children in our age have wrestled with, more or less.) Were we not helping those who were in more dire need than I? What right, I felt, did I have to think my pains of any concern?

These are some of the very things that God has most changed in me, and so I am glad to write them. It remains true that I have labored upon these words while occasionally wondering: what will people think, to know how I have hated enduring some of the things we did? Or else, if anyone approves of my discontent, will he think our efforts were therefore unworthy? That perhaps our mission was futile? To me that would be far worse. I could not willingly tell a story to give the impression that our choices were perfect, or that my family's real victories were easy. Anyone who wants what my parents, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents have carried must surely

be willing to endure grueling opposition, and to make choices that can, from time to time, feel impossibly difficult. Anyone who knows me well has seen a great part of our struggle written in me, playing itself out over the course of my years. But that too, if anything, is my honor: that I, who have railed and cried and fumed at so many of our sacrifices both necessary and unnecessary, may choose to be reconciled to them all—for God's grace covers them all. And least of all could I tell a story of shame or defeat about my family. That could only be a lie.

Later chapters will speak more to these matters. But at the outset, as one raised—with a few small hardships—by a people who truly do believe that their lives must be lost before they can be found, I have a very great wish to testify to this:

You are born for union with God. In a way that is uniquely proper to you, you are to act as God towards the world, and as the very Almighty toward all who are in it. The danger of doing this is exquisitely real. It is also inseparable from its glory. You are to be glorious. To live out this union risks pain for you, your loved ones, and all who love you. For Jesus it led to torture and death—and ultimately to the similar deaths of most of his disciples. If you are like Jesus, your pains will come through no error of your own. If, however, your mind is not yet entirely conformed to the likeness of His (and who claims it?), some of your pains will also come from your errors. It is nonetheless worth risking the possibility of errors, and the greater errors that descend from greater dreams. It is worth daring to act like God. It is worth stepping out of a boat in the belief that you can walk on water. It is worth going to the ends of the earth. If need be, it is also worth staying in a place that may kill you. It is—my word on it—absolutely worth putting even your children in a certain kind of danger. In this world you cannot keep them from danger. But your absolute obedience to God will be to them the greatest inheritance imaginable. It is mighty lineage.

Do this, and they will indeed have to choose for themselves how to respond to the trials you will have subjected them to. Whether in response to your successes or your

failures, they may make foolish choices. They may hurt. They may fail. They may learn things that you did not. They may fall short. They may surpass you. They may do both, in different times and ways. But in this way and in this way only you will have literally given them the best that any parent can give. If they wish to take them up, then at their hands will lay immortal riches, refined by fire. These are worth the cost, for our Lord did not lie: "No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."

If you walk hand-in-hand with your loved ones through the valley of the shadow of death, fear no evil. I say He makes no promise that you will never have to lay your firstborn upon an altar. My great-grandfather did, in a manner of speaking. But God loves your children more than you. And lineage—lineage! Leave this lineage to them in its purity, and you will yet see a great mystery, as great as the sacrifice of God's own child. By that mystery, in all the heavens it will surely be said of your children—as many as desire that which you have left for them—

He will cover them with his feathers,
and under his wings they will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be their shield and rampart.

They will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at their side,
ten thousand at their right hand,
but it will not come near them.

"Because they love me," the Lord will say, "I will rescue them. I will protect them, for they acknowledge my name. They will call upon me, and I will answer them. I will be with them in trouble. I will deliver them. I will honor them. With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation."

APPENDIX C

When Iris began ministry in 1995 in Mozambique, we were nearly destitute and had almost no ability to communicate what was happening except by simple printed newsletters. Then we began to include photographs in these newsletters, and when we developed a website we posted entire photographic galleries online. Now we are developing an Iris media center with the aim of portraying through film and video what God is doing in our part of Africa and in other parts of the world. Our photo galleries and videos are available for viewing at:

<http://www.irisglobal.org/multimedia>

Many of our videos can also be viewed on YouTube, and are listed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/irisministries?feature=watch>

In the following pages we include a few representative photographs that provide a more vivid feel for the world of Iris Global in Africa.



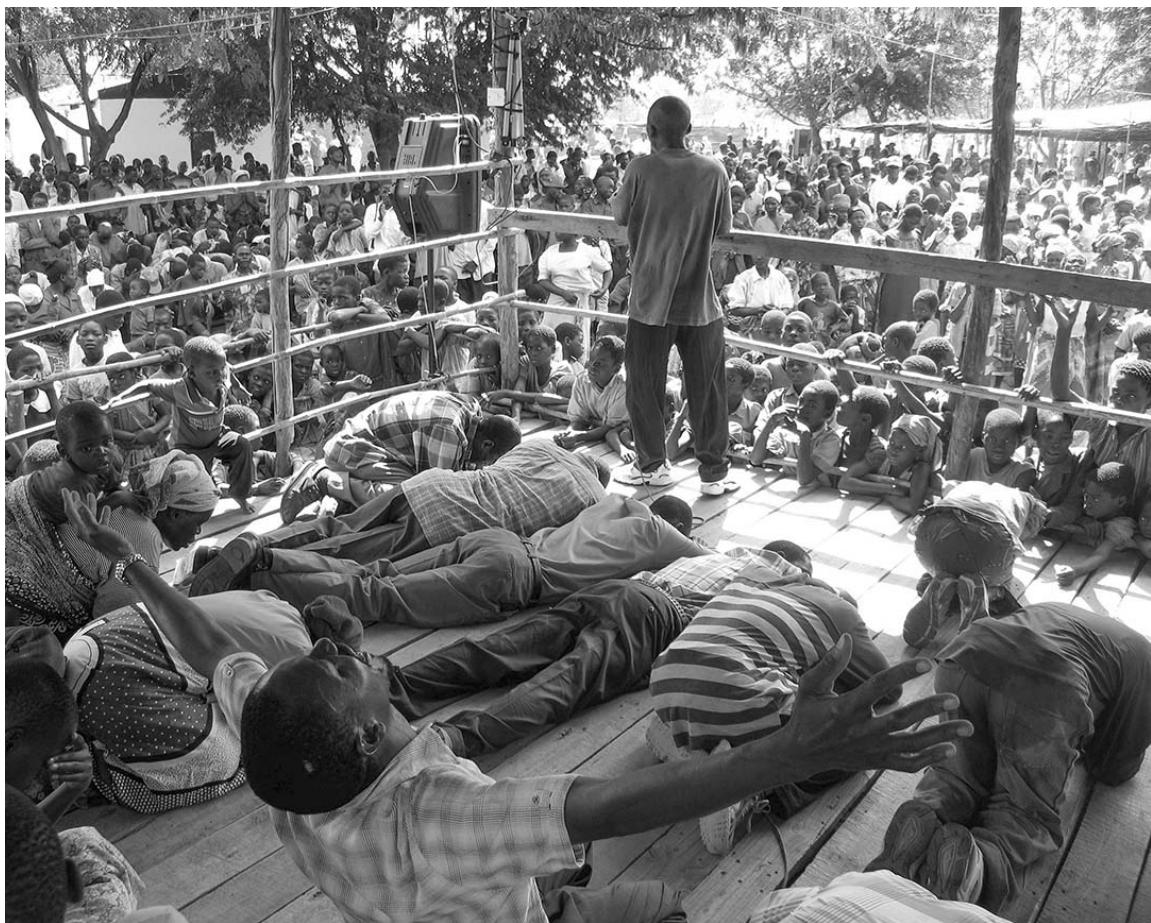
Mozambique has been struck by some of the worst flooding in recorded human history. This is a family of refugees surviving on high ground with many thousands of others, living in shacks made out of whatever grass and sticks they could find. It was a great joy to provide aid in the camps and to minister the gospel to hearts filled with passionate desire for God.



This mother is crying out to God in her desperation and poverty during an Iris “bush conference.” Meetings last all through the day and late into the night, even in the harshest of conditions. Many journey for days without food however they can to these regional gatherings because they heard “Jesus is in town.” He is all and everything they need.



This is Heidi Baker with some of her extremely close Mozambican family, all of whom she and her staff rescued from the streets. Here is love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!



This is an Iris conference in a very remote town in southern Malawi, with several thousand people gathered to hear the word of the Lord, receive the Holy Spirit and come to Jesus for healing and all their needs. They worship all through the day, even in the hot sun and blowing dust of a destitute environment.



Here is a poor, ragged village boy from our church in the mountains of northeast Democratic Republic of Congo, which is one of Iris's ministry frontiers.



Even the poor and elderly in remote corners of Mozambique find peace and joy in the presence of Jesus.



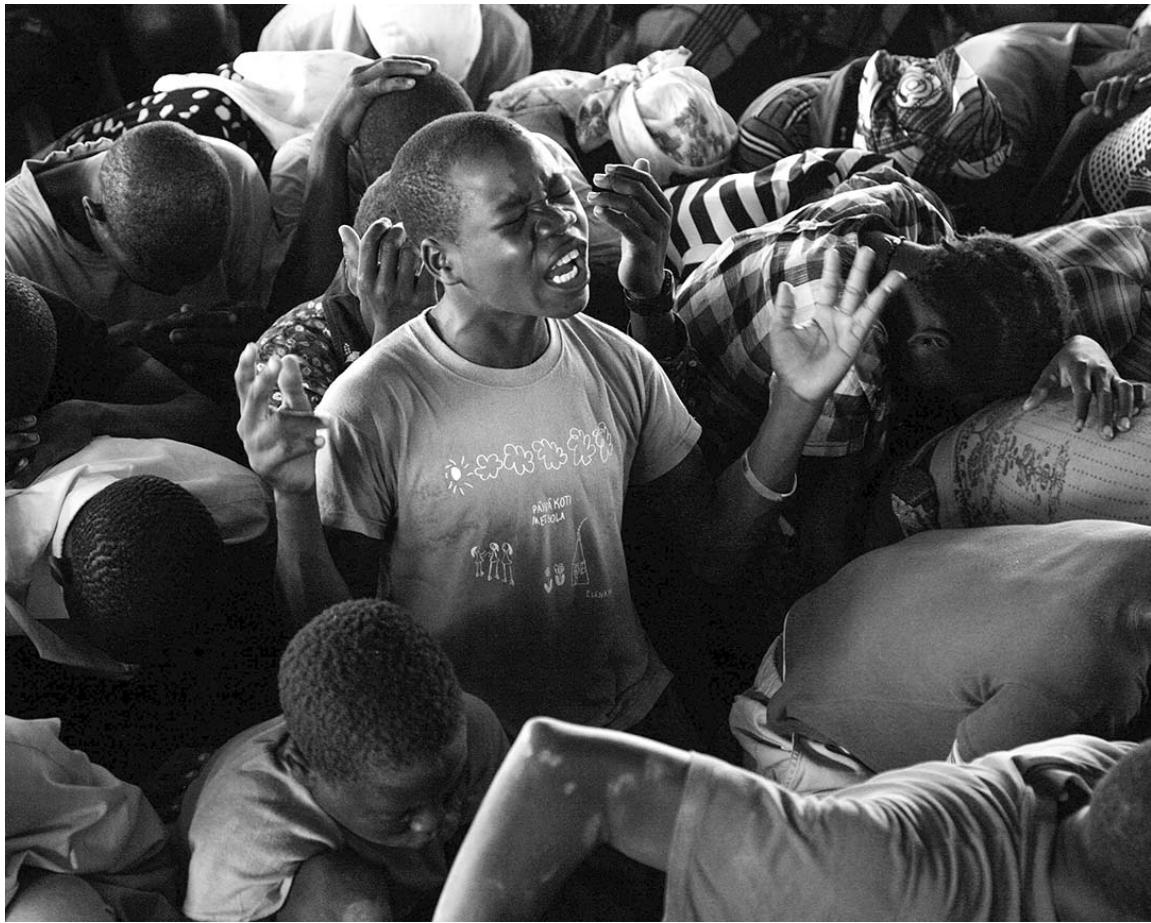
High priority for our ministry is digging wells like this for villages where the people have to walk for hours each way to bring a jug of water back. These wells then become community centers where people congregate and can receive ministry. Showing simple, basic, practical love opens the way for the preaching of the Word.



We baptize new believers wherever we can: in the ocean, in streams and even in muddy water holes. The people are filled with excitement over their new beginning of life in Jesus.



Africans cannot sit still in our meetings, and their high-energy dancing is a feature of every meeting. Their Christianity is a life of intense and free expression of exuberance.



Our African worship is marked not only by dance, but also by deep and powerful expressions of adoration, dependence, need, humility and love.

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